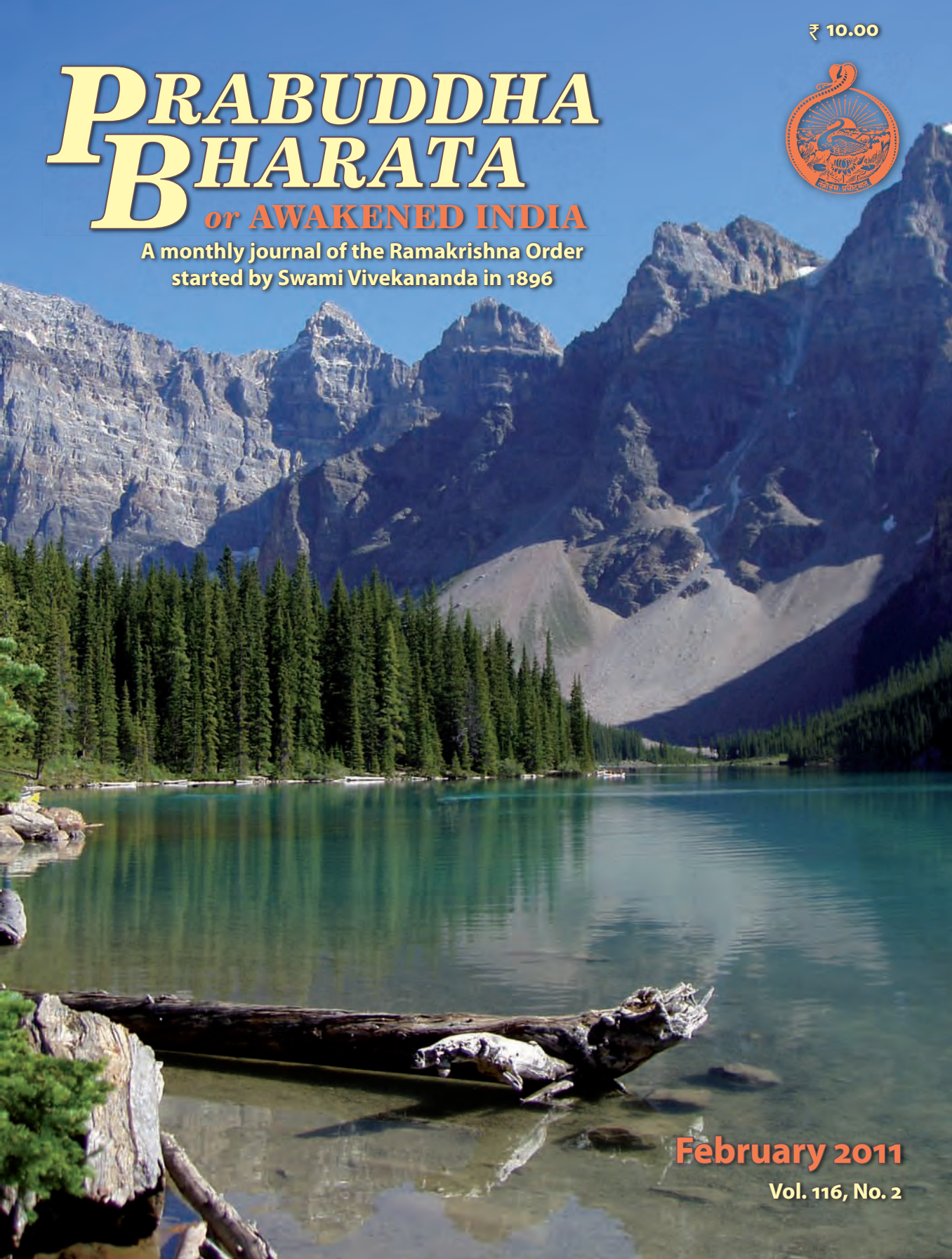


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or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



February 2011

Vol. 116, No. 2

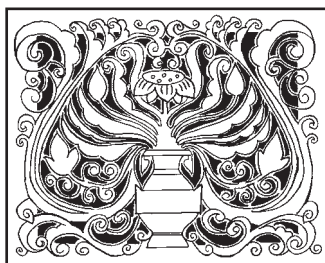


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Amrita Kalasha

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
E-mail: prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

PUBLICATION OFFICE

Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata · 700 014
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2264 0898 / 2264 4000
2286 6450 / 2286 6483
E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org

INTERNET EDITION AT:

www.advaitaashrama.org

Cover photo: 'The Beautiful Side of Creation'
by Karina Krishna

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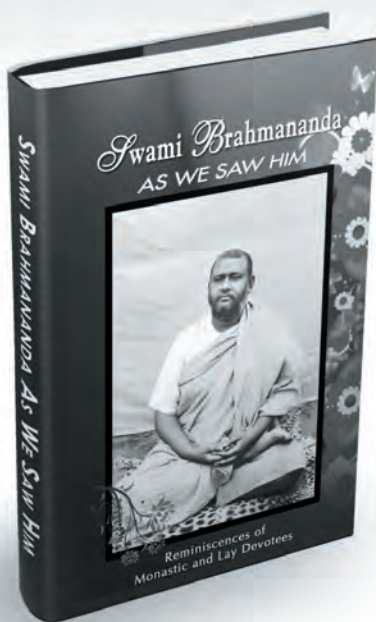
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The Purified Vision

February 2011
Vol. 116, No. 2

ज्ञानस्वरूपमखिलं जगदेतदबुद्धयः ।
अर्थस्वरूपं पश्यन्तो भ्राम्यन्ते मोहसम्पुवे ॥

Those who do not know this entire world as consciousness in reality see it as material and drift in the ocean of delusion.

(*Vishnu Purana*, 1.4.40)

मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यं नेह नानाऽस्ति किञ्चन ।
मृत्योः स मृत्युं गच्छति य इह नानेव पश्यति ॥

This is to be attained through the mind indeed, there is no diversity here whatsoever; he who sees as though there is difference here, goes from death to death.

(*Katha Upanishad*, 2.1.11)

सर्वाजीवे सर्वसंस्थे बृहन्ते अस्मिन् हंसो भ्राम्यते ब्रह्मचक्रे ।
पृथगात्मानं प्रेरितारं च मत्वा जुष्टस्ततस्तेनामृतत्वमेति ॥

The individual soul, considering itself and the Controller as different, revolves in this great wheel of Brahman that is the sustenance of all and the place of dissolution of all. When (one's Self is) adored (as identified) with him (God), (then) thereby one attains immortality.

(*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 1.6)

अज्ञानहृदयग्रन्थेर्विनाशो यद्यशेषतः ।
अनिच्छोर्विषयः किं नु प्रवृत्तेः कारणं स्वतः ॥

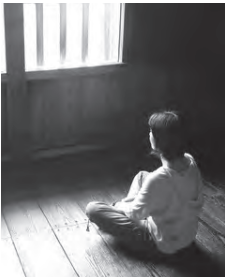
If the heart's knot of ignorance is totally destroyed, what natural cause can there be for inducing such a man to selfish action—the man who is averse to sense-pleasure?

(*Vivekachudamani*, 423)

THIS MONTH

Light has always fascinated humans and its opposite has repelled them. The latter is invariably associated with malevolent forces. Some of the old religions grafted this natural human response successfully to their theology. **Becoming the Glorious Light** looks at the history of human progress as a journey towards light, its source, nature, and location.

Discipline and training stands solidly between crudeness and refinement in any field. Spiritual refinement also needs training. This is explained in **Spiritual Training of the Mind** by Swami Ranganathananda, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Order.



Swami Sridharananda of the Vedanta Centre, Sydney, in his lecture **Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World**, speaks about wisdom as a panacea for today's problems. The lecture was delivered to students at North Lake College in Dallas, Texas, in 2009, and was co-

sponsored by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of North Texas and the Department of Psychology at North Lake College.

Every epoch sees a paradigm shift in human thinking and an avatara is the fulcrum of this shift. The second part of Swami Bhajanananda's insightful article enunciates the significance of Sri Ramakrishna as **The New Man of the Age**. The author is Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

The profound implication of the Divine Mother's command to Sri Ramakrishna 'you remain in *bhavamukha*' has not yet dawned on the religious consciousness of the world. Swami Atmapriyananda, Vice Chancellor, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur, concludes his exploration on this subject in **Understanding Bhāvamukha: Sri Ramakrishna's Unique State of Consciousness**.

The avatara is a blend of the Divine and the human. No one can exactly say where one meets the other. It is for this reason that the avatara's descriptions on himself become so important. Mohit Ranjan Das, engineer and environment management consultant in Kolkata, is the compiler of **Sri Ramakrishna on Himself**.



In the eleventh instalment of **Vedanta-sara** Swami Bhaskareswarananda, former President of Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, comments on the origination of different bodies and how every aspect of life is guided by various divinities.



A very moving account of Sri Ramakrishna and of those drawn by his suffering and spirituality is given by Swami Chetanananda, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis,

in **Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna**.

EDITORIAL

Becoming the Glorious Light

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT humanity has gradually progressed from its primitive origins. This progress was phenomenal in the last two centuries. Many ascribe this dramatic progress to science and scientific thinking. Whatever be the cause, one thing is for certain: humanity has left behind the hazy, murky, twilight world of the paranormal and the superstitious and travelled into the light. This shadowy occult world of black magic, sorcery, secret initiations, incantations, and blood sacrifices, of psychic powers and mediums, of malevolent influences and exorcisms is now considered abnormal and dismissed as hoax. A few persons still dabble in that, and others are awestruck by its strangeness—some things are difficult to be shaken off. This shadowy world in many primitive cultures took centre stage, but in advanced cultures and established religions it existed at the fringes of society, and still does. That is because this mysterious world exists on the fringes of human consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly taught that this umbral region does not belong to religion and spirituality and is an area that ought to be renounced. One reason, apart from science, why humanity has progressed is that it abhors the gloom, the shadows, and wants to dwell in the light. This shows the orientation and the evolution of the mind. This evolution can be hastened through proper sadhana.

Today, even with the accumulation of a vast data on every conceivable subject, the belief that humanity is merely scratching the surface of knowledge is growing. The more one knows, the

more one learns how little one knows. Humans are speeding to catch the horizon only to find it has receded. Nothing is merely cut and dried, but there are many invisible factors operating in and around every object. Natural laws, formal philosophical logic, and reason are inadequate to explain many things. The Bhagavadgita says, 'Knowledge remains covered by ignorance. Thereby the creatures become deluded.' Is the old hazy world exerting its influence on humans? Is the scientific world view truly a deception? There is no certitude in most fields but plenty of doubts, discords, dissensions, disagreements, and differences. The world built by science and scientific thinking instead of freeing humanity has imprisoned it. When it comes to personal lives no one is really happy with others or even with oneself. People's minds are devoid of love, dark with despair and anxiety, frightened by loneliness and festering secrets that make life rotten. Most of the wicked and cruel acts are performed secretly away from the glare, in the darkness and shadows. Humanity is starting and shuddering at its own shadows. Swami Vivekananda says: 'We are walking in the midst of a dream, half sleeping, half waking, passing all our lives in a haze; this is the fate of every one of us. This is the fate of all sense-knowledge. This is the fate of all philosophy, of all boasted science, of all boasted human knowledge. This is the universe.'

Thus, the hazy old shadowy world that humans left behind has possessed the mind in a different form, as it were. Humanity not only

meaninglessly lives in the penumbra of the old shadows, but all life is a shadow. 'The Master used to see the living presence of the Mother in the temple's stone image of Her; now he could not see that stone image at all. In its place was the living Mother, the embodiment of consciousness, Her hands bestowing boons and fearlessness. Later he described what actually happened: "I put my hand near the Mother's nostrils and felt that She was actually breathing. At night I watched carefully, but in the lamp-light I could never see Her shadow on the temple wall." God has no shadow. This may puzzle many as to why God does not have a shadow. This is due to a poor and stunted understanding that existence means having a body, and consciousness means the workings of the brain or mind. It is very difficult to believe that the body and the mind are a mere outer crust, a shadow on the vast ocean of Existence and Consciousness. Swami Vivekananda, in the 'Real and Apparent Man', says: 'The greatest of all lies is that we are bodies, which we never were nor can ever be.' God does not have a shadow because God is beyond the 'greatest of all lies'.

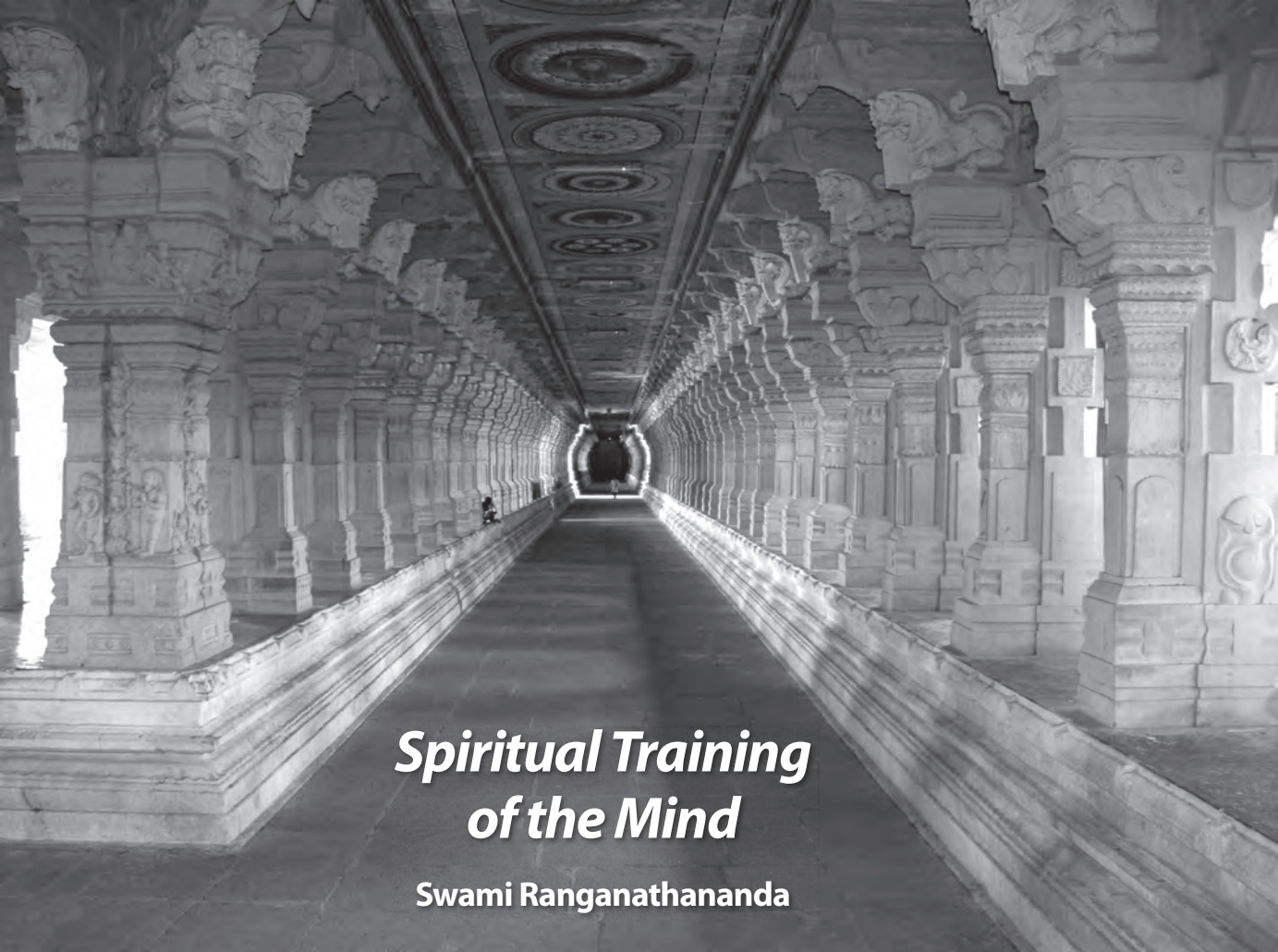
In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Emperor Janaka questions Yajnavalkya, 'What serves as a light for a man?' And the sage replies that it is the sun. It is through sunlight that activities become possible. And when the sun has set? Yajnavalkya takes up one after another the moon, fire, speech. But when the moon has set, fire extinguished, speech has stopped? Yajnavalkya concludes, 'The Atman serves as his light. It is through the light of the Atman that he sits, goes out, works, and returns.' The real human being is the luminous Atman, and the human being that one knows is a shadow. This is brought out in a beautiful illustration in the *Mundaka Upanishad* that speaks of two birds ever associated with similar names, inhabiting the same tree.

The higher one is silent, without the need to eat, and ever immersed in its own glory; the lower one keeps eating the bitter and sweet fruits of the tree. The lower bird is the jiva who, after much suffering and moaning when it sees the other, the adored Lord in his glory, becomes liberated from all sorrow—the shadow vanishes. The *Katha Upanishad* also gives, in the same strain, an esoteric description. 'The knowers of Brahman ... compare to light and shade, the two enjoyers of the inevitable results of work, who have entered within the body, into the cavity of the heart, which is the supreme abode of the most high.' Sri Shankaracharya comments: 'Of these two, one drinks—enjoys—the fruit of work, and not the other. Still, both are called enjoyers because of the association with the enjoyer.' Undoubtedly people have been erroneously taking the shadow-self for the Real, and the Real for a chimera.

The extensively used ancient Vedic prayer has grown in significance for today's world: 'Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality.' This prayer and its answers have been the true history of humankind and the main cause of development. Humankind saw a faint glimmer in the gloom and went towards it, and is still going towards it. It has travelled out of the darkness with its help, it has also traversed the hazy shadowy world, but in the process it has projected that glimmer outside. The light was and is inside.

An evolved human mind is bereft of many dark recesses and shadows, and a sadhaka intensifying this mental evolution has even a more luminous mind through sadhana. Such a person oriented towards the light's dwelling place 'in the cavity of the heart' become gradually that light, as the sage Yajnavalkya says, 'In this state the man himself becomes the light.'





Spiritual Training of the Mind

Swami Ranganathananda

TODAY WE HAVE a very important subject for discussion: spiritual training of the mind. At the last meeting we had the subject of philosophy of work, which also involves spiritual training of the mind. To be a good worker one needs a highly trained mind for achieving a double efficiency, as I said on that occasion: external productive efficiency, inward personality efficiency. That is the philosophy of work. This evening it is an exclusive subject—spiritual training of the mind.

A True Mind

A need is being felt today for training the mind for achieving spiritual strength. We train the mind for various purposes. For science there is

a training of the mind—scientific method, scientific outlook. For every profession there is a training of the mind. To make money we have to train the mind. In daily life you will find a lot of training, and a trained mind is most effective. An untrained mind is not so effective. A teacher trained in an institution becomes a better teacher, so also a nurse or a doctor or an administrator. Training is essential to increase the efficiency of the human mind.

But what is this spiritual training? It is an entirely new conception of utmost importance to us in this modern period, because all the ailments of the human system proceed from somewhere within man himself. The mind is not properly trained, it is not disciplined, it is

not controlled, it is wild. So a study of this subject is going to be very rewarding in this modern age. Spiritual—when we use this word—we deal with some profound dimension within man himself. The material, the spiritual: we do not proceed on the assumption that there is a conflict between the two. But if you neglect the spiritual, dealing only with the material, then whatever success comes out of it will turn into ashes. That's what is happening today. All the success in handling the world has not given us that sense of fulfilment that it was expected to give. We tried to find happiness in things and slowly we are realizing that happiness is not in things: it is a state of mind. If that state of mind can be achieved we can get happiness with less things or with more things. Every day this truth is forced upon us, that there is something to do with this mind. We can't take it for granted. When there is crime we can see the effect of not handling the mind in that situation. The mind is drawn to a thing and immediately acts according to that desire, and that becomes a crime. Had the mind been properly disciplined, that crime would not have happened.

How does the mind function? This is a wonderful study. Here is this human organism. We have the five sense organs of perception that see the world, bring information about the world, and present it to the mind. It is the mind that has to process this whole thing. So far as man is concerned, he has a mind, he has the capacity to process experience. He must exercise that capacity. But in most cases it is not done. Whenever the sense organs present something the mind immediately reacts to it, runs after it, as we see. All crime happens when the mind doesn't discriminate what is presented by the senses. It simply follows the senses and it gets into trouble. That's what happens in all cases of delinquency or crime.

There is a beautiful verse in the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita, which gives you in a picture form this state of man: *Indriyanam hi charatam yanmano'nu-vidhiyate; tadasya harati prajnam vayur-navam-ivambhasi*.¹ Here are the objects in the world. Some attract you, some repel you. These sense organs are attracted by certain objects in the world and immediately the mind follows the sense organs towards the object to possess it. This is what normally happens where there is no discrimination. *Indriyanam hi charatam yanmano'nu-vidhiyate*. Those sense organs move out into the world of touch and sight and sound, and the mind simply follows the sense organs without questioning, without discrimination. What happens? *Tadasya harati prajnam*. Whatever wisdom is there in that man, that is destroyed thereby. This very process destroys the wisdom that is there. *Prajna* is the word for wisdom. In Buddha's teachings you will find the word *prajna*. A wonderful word, *prajna*, wisdom; jnana, knowledge. *Tadasya harati prajnam*. Man's *prajna* or wisdom is destroyed by that particular process. The mind without questioning, without discrimination follows in the wake of the sense organs. Then what happens? The shloka ends with *vayur-navam-ivambhasi*. Here is a boat tossed about in the waves of the sea. Its rudder is broken, it becomes a helpless wreck. According to the wind and the waves it has to move, it has no capacity for direction within itself. Man becomes like that capsized boat. This is the state of mind of many, many modern people in the world.

The sense organs and the *manas*, mind, and the sense objects outside. In this case the mind is not truly mind; it is just another sense organ. Mind has its own status. That status has not been achieved in this case. How does it achieve that status? That status comes to the mind when it is able to say 'no' to the sense organs, 'yes' to

the sense organs, as a result of its own discrimination. It must be independent of the sense organs, it must be able to guide, to control, to discipline the sense organs. Then only mind becomes mind, otherwise it is no mind at all. It is one more sense organ, and sense organs have no discrimination. They just run after everything. They alight on everything in the world.

In another verse, in the same section of the Gita, Krishna gives you a different picture. How a man can be really wise, really stable, really fulfilled while living and working in this world: *Raga-dvesha-viyuktaistu vishayan-indriyaish-charan; atmavashyair-vidheyatma prasadam-adhigachchhati* (2.64). Let this mind follow in the wake of the sense organs, there is no harm. Let the sense organs deal with the sense objects, there is no harm. But the mind has been properly trained. It has been given a sense of its own freedom, its independence. It is not a slave of the sensory system. How does it achieve this? *Raga-dvesha-viyuktaistu*. That person who is free from attachments and aversions, who is not just functioning according to the immediate attractions of things, or aversion towards things, he has the power of discrimination. *Raga-dvesha-viyuktaistu vishayan-indriyaishcharan*. This mind with that training can go through the sense organs and go through all the sense objects of the world without any fear. *Atmavashyair*. Why? He is perfectly self-controlled, self-disciplined. *Vasha* means controlled. *Atmavashyair* means the mind is in full control. The mind is controlled by the mind itself, not by an object there. In the other case it is the object that controls the mind. Here it is the mind that controls itself. *Atmavashyair-vidheyatma*. A fully free individual himself orders his life, doesn't depend on something else outside. That outside pull is not there. He chooses to go out, he chooses to remain in; nobody pulls him out. If somebody pulls him out, he becomes a slave. If you don't go

out and somebody comes and pulls you out, then you are not free. So here this man is free. I go out when I feel like going, I don't go out when I don't feel like going out. *Atmavashyair-vidheyatma prasadam-adhigachchhati*. That person achieves *prasada*, tranquillity, peace—that's the language used there. We don't say 'don't go into the world,' we don't say 'don't move among sense objects.' Do so, but go as a free soul, go with a sense of strength, with a sense of the freedom of your own mind. Do not be a helpless thing in the hands of external things, going here and there just like that boat in the storm, rudderless. It finally wrecks. That should not be the fate of man.

These two verses of the second chapter of the Gita occur in a section containing about nineteen verses known as *sthitaprajna* verses—verses dealing with the man of steady wisdom. He need not be in a forest or in a cave, isolated from the world. He can be in the heart of the world. He can work. He can enjoy the beautiful spectacle of the universe, but as a free soul, not as a slave. Vivekananda repeatedly said to work as a free

This gross mind cannot comprehend God. God is far beyond both the mind and the intellect. The world that you see is within the domain of the mind. The mind is its author. The mind has created it, and beyond it the mind cannot go. But through sadhana, a subtle mind opens up. That is already in you in seed form. Through sadhana this seed develops and unfolds, and through that subtle mind you can have the vision of finer truths. This subtle mind, however, cannot take you up to God, but it does take you quite near Him. The world with all its diversity will then lose all charm for you. Then you will feel like remaining always immersed in the contemplation of God and His glory.

—The Eternal Companion

Life and Teachings of Swami Brahmananda, 282

person, not as a slave. Don't be compelled. What a beautiful language. When you are compelled you are no more free.

For what is the definition of freedom? In a famous verse the definition is given as: *Sarvam paravasham dukkham sarvam-atmavasham sukham; etad-vidyat-samasena lakshanam sukha-dukkhayoh.*² Understand the characteristics of happiness and sorrow in this way. Whatever is dependent on other forces or items is called 'unfreedom', whatever is dependent on oneself, that is called freedom. To be constantly handled by other forces is to be a mere slave, but to be free from all such things is called real freedom. In this way, if the mind is free, it knows when to engage in which things, when to return back to itself. That kind of capacity the mind gets, but normally that capacity doesn't come to most minds.

Freedom of the Mind

Minds are dragged by the sensory system. You can study this in the context of crime in society, where the mind is dragged. Somebody goes to a super-bazaar, even decent people; the mind is dragged by the sense organs. 'The nice thing that is displayed there I must carry', and he steals it. Immediately he is caught then tried, and asked, 'Why did you steal it? You are such a good person. There were seventy dollars in your pocket. Still, why did you steal?' 'I don't know. I am sorry, it just happened.' In all such cases you can see the external world pulls you through the sensory system and you begin to experience that sense of helplessness, dependence, and all that suffering that comes in its way. This should not happen.

That's a great teaching in Vedanta. Here is the human mind. Nature intended the human mind to be the guide to the senses, the controller of the senses, not the slave of the senses. The cerebral system is the instrument of mind put on the top of the human body, so that you can get a far-sight

and foresight. If it were somewhere below you would have seen a different world; here you can see far, that's why nature put it here. And here it is put to control everything, to discipline everything, to use the human energy to carry the life to a higher level. What is that level?

Freedom! Man must achieve freedom. Throughout the Vedanta literature you find that this subject is given to man. Freedom is the objective of human life. This psychophysical energy system, if it is properly controlled and disciplined and directed by the cerebral system, which itself is free, one can achieve freedom here and now. Freedom is the goal according to Vedanta; freedom is the goal according to modern neurology. Emancipation, freedom is the word used in a book on neurology by Grey Walter, *The Living Brain*. Can you achieve freedom? What is freedom except this: the mind can choose what it likes and not forced to choose this way or that way by the sensory system. So that when you come to the spiritual side of life, you are coming to a different world entirely—a world beyond the sensory level—and the mind is beyond the sensory level. Normally, the mind is within the sensory level, but at this stage we enter into a new field. Here is this mind, let me give it a training, let me make it free, let me make it so constituted that it will be able to give me the taste of my own true nature. What is my true nature I do not know. I am pulled and pushed here and there. Now I shall try to achieve freedom, try to understand my own true nature.

When men and women engage themselves in this kind of struggle, they enter into a new world of experience, a new world of human development. Apart from the day-to-day eating, drinking, pleasure, comfort—that is one side of life, and mind is very much trained for that purpose. They take this mind and give a new training so that it can carry life to a higher level. That is the

importance of the spiritual training of the mind. Only when we are convinced that there is a higher dimension to life, we engage ourselves in the spiritual training of the mind. If nothing higher exists than this sensory world, then there is no meaning in the spiritual training of the mind. We need a worldly training to avoid whatever pitfalls are there, to succeed in what we do; that training we need, that training we all get. Even if you do wrong, you can train the mind to see that you don't suffer from that wrong. That's why if you are entirely worldly, you can train the mind, and train the mind in such a way that you get the best of things.

How to get rid of difficulties in life? Moses gave people the Ten Commandments—thou shall do this, thou shall not do this, and so on. But a cynical person said, there are eleven commandments; only ten were recorded. And what is the eleventh? A trained mind in the worldly sense today follows that eleventh commandment. Even if you break all the ten commandments, see that you are not caught by the law; escape it! That's called a trained mind. A worldly trained mind is very efficient in such a trade, and today the situation is worse. You can break all the laws and not be caught. That is the eleventh commandment.

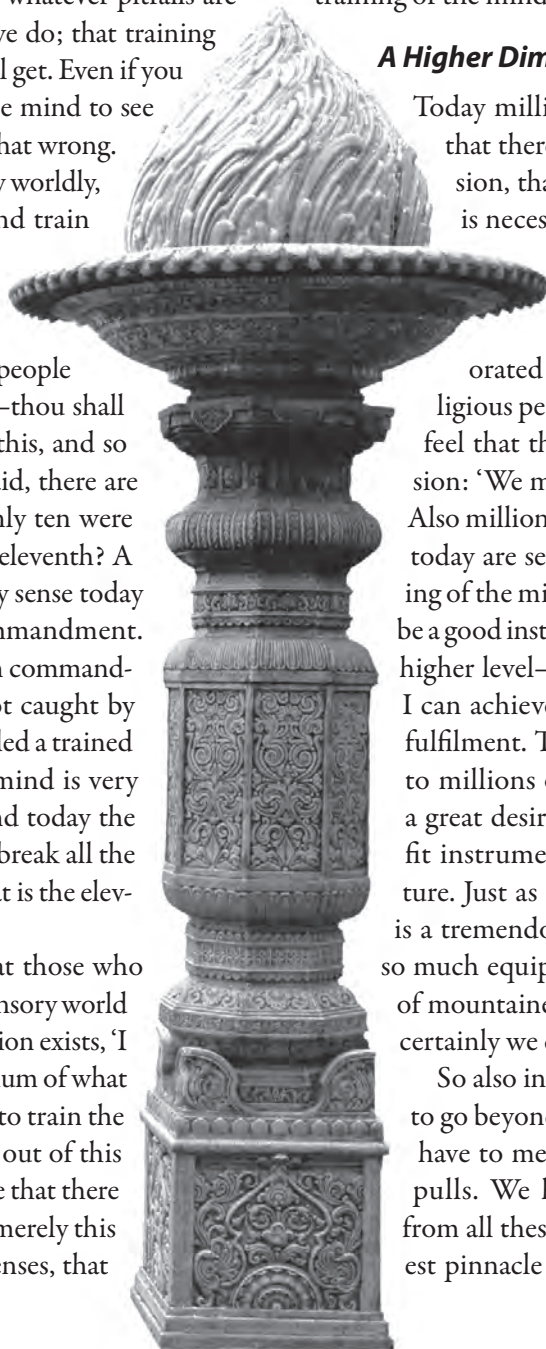
From this it follows that those who understand that only this sensory world exists, only sensory satisfaction exists, 'I am here to enjoy the maximum of what is offered'—they also need to train the mind to get the maximum out of this world. But when you realize that there is a higher dimension, not merely this world viewed by the five senses, that

there is something higher, there is something spiritual, what they call transcending the sensory system, then comes the need to turn the mind in that direction. And when you turn the mind, you need to train the mind how to function in that dimension. That is the meaning of spiritual training of the mind.

A Higher Dimension

Today millions of people have said that there is such a higher dimension, that such a mental training is necessary for the mind. Apart from the world's religions—which are generally rather deteriorated today—still there are religious people in the world who do feel that there is a spiritual dimension: 'We must go in that direction.' Also millions of non-religious people today are seeking the spiritual training of the mind, so that this mind can be a good instrument to take life to that higher level—that higher level where I can achieve true freedom and true fulfilment. This conviction has come to millions of people today. Hence, a great desire to train this mind as a fit instrument for that great adventure. Just as climbing Mount Everest is a tremendous adventure—we need so much equipment, we need so much of mountaineering training, and then certainly we can go to the top.

So also in the spiritual life we have to go beyond many obstructions. We have to meet so many gravitational pulls. We have to take this mind from all these difficulties to the highest pinnacle step by step. That needs



training, and a trained mind can achieve wonderful things, as in physical science a trained mind can discover truth hidden in nature. That training is essential for a scientist. Training in precision, training in observation, training in precise speech, training in finding a law or a rule behind all the diverse data that has been accumulated. All this kind of scientific training has made possible immense discoveries regarding the world in which we live, the environment in which our life functions. That is a beautiful example of a trained mind achieving great things.

But a scientist himself, in his own life, is not able to achieve that lofty purpose because his mind is trained only for the external purposes. In his own inner life he has not trained how to handle the energies and the forces that are there. Inner nature has not been handled by the mind; the external nature has been handled by the mind. The first great truth that Vedanta tells us is that nature has an internal dimension apart from an external dimension. That internal dimension

is present in you, in me, in all. That nature also needs to be handled. When that nature is mastered, then we shall be truly free. Otherwise we shall be like a primitive man controlled by the forces of external nature. We shall be another type of primitive man controlled by the forces of internal nature. That should not be.

Therefore, this training of the mind for spiritual development, for spiritual growth, for spiritual strength becomes essential at that stage. Religions prescribe various method of training the mind. For spiritual purposes the first basic requirement is what you call the moral and the ethical base of spiritual growth. Without that base no higher development can come. This sensory system is disciplined, to some extent, to live what we normally call ethical, moral life. A concern for others, a spirit of service, a spirit of dedication—through all these things we establish an ethical, moral base. The higher life is not possible without establishing oneself in the lower life. Lower life is a sensory life, and in this life itself we need an ethical base. Higher spiritual development cannot come when we are immoral, unethical at this ordinary level.

If I exploit people, if I am selfish, if I become violent here, I cannot reach higher spiritual development. So, this base must be strengthened first. There is one word in Vedanta and in Buddha's teachings that expresses the entire gamut of values, including this discipline of ethical and moral life in the external life. That is called *shila*. *Shila* means morality, in simple language. But it also means all those virtues and graces that make you a beautiful citizen, able to interact with other citizens in a constructive way. You work for the good of society around you. All this constitute citizenship. Here also you need disciplining of the sense organs. Mind disciplining the sense organs at the social level—that is called spirituality adapted to social requirements. That is also

Sit quietly and watch the wanderings of the mind; notice where it goes. You are not the mind forsooth; the mind is yours. You are separate from the mind; you are the Self itself. Sit quietly like a witness, watching the ramblings of the mind. After wandering for a time the mind will get tired; then take hold of it and make it think of the Master. Whenever the mind wants to escape, catch hold of it and make it meditate on the Master. If you go on trying continuously like this, the mind will gradually become calm. Then repeat God's name with intense love and meditate on Him. Do as I have told you for some days, and you will find that the mind has come under your control. But one thing I tell you, that is, you have to do this daily and regularly with sincere steadfastness.

—For Seekers of God,

Spiritual Talks of Mahapurush Swami Shivananda, 258

spirituality. There is spiritual growth but in the context of man's life in society. And a good life is what you get thereby, what in all religions we call the good life, the moral life. A good man you can always trust, we say. Give some money in his hands, he will return it to you when you need. He won't appropriate it himself. This kind of trustworthiness comes to you in the moral life. Even there, how much training of the mind is needed. We don't have it to that extent in this modern period.

It is said that some hundred years ago people went to Banaras for pilgrimage. Whatever money a man had, he gave to a friend to keep it. 'If I return give it to me; if not give it to so and so, my wife, or somebody,' he would say. He takes one year to go to and come from Banaras. He goes walking to Banaras. Then he returns. The whole money goes back to him. That is the condition. Nobody appropriated these things. Because they knew there is a higher value. But today, even if you write a promissory note, sign it, get it registered, still he will say, 'I don't know anything, I have not taken your money, do what you like.' Such kind of cheating is plenty. Today's world is full of cheating. That honesty is not there.

The Cerebral System

Vivekananda said in his lectures in America that when you were a cannibal you ate each other, and today you cheat each other; which is better, eating each other or cheating each other? The latter is called the civilized way; the former, the uncivilized way. Now, in all these cases you will find that the moral base has not been laid. That human face; 'I am here along with other human beings. I have a response to that human situation. When I do so, I become moral, I become ethical.' That aspect is called *shila*. A measure of self-discipline is needed to have *shila*. I may have desires; I may have the desire to have money,

there is no harm; but don't have greed. When greed comes everything is upset. In this way, in all the external life, you will find discipline in a particular level, where other people's interests are not jeopardized; then you have got *shila* from that point of view. On the basis of *shila* you can rise higher. This psychic energy can be raised to a higher level, once it is stabilized at the moral level, at the level of goodness, as we say.

When I quoted neurology, I often mentioned it was nature's method that before she advances in evolution she stabilizes that particular level at which we are functioning. Then, after stabilizing, she goes to the next step. That stabilization of an earlier condition is absolutely necessary. One famous French physiologist, Claude Bernard, is quoted by Grey Walter in his book *The Living Brain*. There he quotes this sentence from that great physiologist: 'A fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life.' That is the sentence. 'A fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life.' What does it mean? It says that in this nature achieved by the human body, much earlier in the mammal's body, a system of internal stabilization functions. There is a temperature control, control of the constituents of the blood—all these constituents were stabilized in the later mammals. And man has inherited that condition. Because it was stabilized in later mammals, nature could evolve the higher cerebral system higher and higher. In man you have got such a fine brain: the cerebral system, a beautiful instrument to carry evolution to a higher level. This early stabilization, temperature stabilization, the constituents of the blood like oxygen, iron, and other items in the human blood stream—all this is stabilized. If there is disturbance somewhere, it is automatically stabilized. This automatic stabilization of the inner system is known as homeostasis.

(Continued on page 267)

A black and white photograph of a person sitting cross-legged on a wooden floor, looking out a window with vertical bars. The person is seen from the back, and the light from the window creates a strong silhouette effect. The window has several vertical bars and a horizontal crossbar.

Ancient Wisdom for a Postmodern World

Swami Sridharananda

DEAR FRIENDS, it pleases me most to tell you that I have been able to devote my life to an ideal to which I owe my existence, as it were: that is, Swami Vivekananda. He was the first Hindu monk to address the Parliament of Religions held in 1893 in Chicago. When he returned to India he formed the Ramakrishna organization. It was registered as a philosophical, religious, and charitable body with no idea of profit, but to serve humanity. And the swami classified services into materially-oriented, emotionally-oriented, rationally-oriented, and finally spiritually-oriented—that all range of services be rendered to society. Therefore, the question of ancient wisdom for a postmodern world has its relevance today.

Two Branches of Knowledge

Let me try to place before you first what is happening today, though you may be much more aware of the details. I understand what is happening through the knowers of truth, the ‘rishis’. This Sanskrit word means ‘a seer’. A rishi is one who has experienced the truth of this world and is a knower of the Self, the eternal Spirit. With deep insight the Indian rishi understood what human beings were going to face in the future.

That is the period of the Upanishads. The Upanishads form parts of the sacred books called Vedas, which scholars put at some four to six thousand years ago. This estimation is to some extent a presumption, because people have not been able to place that age historically. But,

PHOTO: ‘PEACE’ BY MOMO / FLICKR

generally speaking, it has been accepted by academicians and scholars that the Upanishadic age was some time between four to six thousand years ago. In the *Mundaka Upanishad* we find the wisdom of a rishi who had known the Reality behind the apparent world.

This rishi was questioned by an extremely enlightened and successful householder, who was absolutely involved with his domestic commitments and had achieved what he thought he could achieve in his professional life. But suffering from a feeling of satiety, he went to the rishi and asked him: 'Sir, which is that thing which having been known all this becomes known?'

The rishi replied, in modern language easily understandable, that there are two branches of knowledge, which a man must acquire in an integrated manner. If he wants to know the Truth, the Reality behind this transitory world, if he wants to be well-established in knowledge, he has two branches of knowledge to master: one is what is known as material science; the other, he says, is spiritual science. The first, *apara vidya*, is indispensable knowledge, but not sublime. It pertains to external nature, with which we live and interact. The other is *para vidya*, higher sublime knowledge. Make sure you expose yourself to both of them in such a manner that you develop an integrated understanding of the material world together with the spiritual world.

Let us look at what material prosperity or material science does for us. We belong to the modern age and we look towards the future every moment of our lives. We are exposed to new concepts, ideas, and facts of life. But to generalize, what is happening? We are trying to know the mysteries and secrets of external nature because knowledge is power, and the more we know, the more we have that nature, those forces, under our control. We make use of those forces to improve the quality and comforts of life. We learn

to improve the conveniences of life, and there is no boundary to it. Every moment we try to master some aspect of the cosmic force manifested in this universe in diverse forms. In any branch of science, any branch of the humanities, you can see what progress human civilization is making. Knowledge is being transformed into improving the quality of our physical life and living.

A thousand techniques are being taught in the universities of the world in how to manage situations, how to manage the forces of external nature. By proper management the quality and conditions and comforts are increasing by leaps and bounds. But does the person who is supposed to manage it know the art of managing himself? Does any university highlight this?

What enormous power and strength is amassed in a human! He is supposed to use it for the greater good of humankind—that is the ideal we are taught. But is he able to manage his greed? Is he able to manage his not-so-divine passions for the sake of the greater good, for the sake of the greater number? Does he not fail himself?

How can he learn to manage himself? What is that branch of knowledge? We do not find it in material sciences. To find it we have to look back. What is it that will teach us how to manage ourselves and make us the managers of the whole world of power and wealth that we have acquired by our own wisdom and hard labour? We have not been taught how to manage the passions, which have such a tremendous hold on us. We may be plain greedy when an opportunity comes to transform wealth for the greater good of the greater number. We fail; we try instead to divert it for our own selfish needs or attitudes. It is a fact of life. Nobody can deny it.

This lower branch of learning is not to be denigrated; it is indispensable knowledge for the progress of human civilization. It is a must. But how do you balance the force that such

knowledge yields? How can people be capable of managing it for the greater good, for the greater number? Our ideology is that we live for others, we do not live for ourselves. This is the nobility of the human character. We have the capacity and we have the quality of being sympathetic and empathetic.

The teachers of the past had a depth of intensity in experiencing the Reality along with a capacity to transform that intensity into a well-disciplined educational program, known as *para vidya*, higher knowledge. What is this knowledge? What does it do? What changes does it bring? That knowledge—the sublime knowledge—is a man-making, character-building education that does not move in circles but is oriented in a straight direction. Such man-making, character-building education helps us as ordinary human beings to manifest the potential Divinity which is already within ourselves, which somehow or other lies hidden, almost forgotten, to make us aware of our own divine character.

The purpose of being born human is to manifest the Divinity already within us. It is part and parcel of the sublime, supreme process of self-education. Spirituality is not divorced from materialism. Spirituality is an approach. It is an attitude towards life. How do I live my life? Only to amass power and wealth? Along with amassing a world of wisdom and power and wealth through mastering the material sciences, I also become a storehouse, an engine of energy. I must learn to manage these forces of nature that act within me all the time. Let us not remain vague. I will explain to you how our teachers have explained the forces of nature, cosmic energy, in the Upanishads.

Cosmic Energy

Today physicists say that the sun is the source of cosmic energy. We have seen, through the study

of different branches of the material sciences, how cosmic energy diversely manifests itself in millions of forms. Human society is breaking open and mastering the fortress of those energies and utilizing them for the improvement in quality of life. Parallel to this, the teacher of ancient wisdom says, pay a little attention to yourself and educate yourself. Adult education is self-education. Keep your eyes and ears open, absorb ideas and put them into practice in a process of experimentation. You have very expensive laboratories for material sciences. Convert your own psyche into an experimental laboratory as well: What happens to you if you are selfless? You are at par with God if you are selfless.

The teachers of the past, the rishis, the propounders of ancient wisdom, analysed the forces of nature that are at play within the human being. If I should enumerate them to you, all of you would assent and nod. It is nothing new, we all know it. What is it? We humans are very proud. We are rational beings proud of our faculty of rationality, proud of our capacity to feel for others emotionally, proud of our ingenuity. What is ingenuity? 'I request you, my dear friend, to kindly do me a favour.' 'What favour, swami?' 'This is the favour I want from you.' You think it over. You have the right to say 'no', you have the right to say 'yes'. And then, to help you, I try to suggest that you do it in such a manner. You say, 'Swami, stop; I will do it my way,' and you will not listen to me. And you find your own way of doing it. This is the human ingenuity in you. It is the source of all experimentation, the source of all Nobel Prizes that you read about in the papers. It is based on human rationality, human emotionality, ingenuity, and an unstoppable willpower.

Rationality, emotionality, ingenuity, and unstoppable willpower—the forces acting in nature—are now being analysed. Why? To prepare

you to expose yourself to man-making, character-building in order to manifest the Divinity which is already within, but which we have totally forgotten. This is the sublime knowledge, *para vidya*. It will now come to save human society from its own destructive ways.

These first four forces active in nature are the foundation of all progress in the material sciences that we have achieved. But there are also a few forces at play within us that are not so noble. You cannot deny their existence or wish them away. They are the inordinate desire for things—anger, greed, confusion, vanity, arrogance, and jealousy and the inability to see excellence in others. They are very much in play within us, so we must be aware of all that we are. The teacher says that being an honest and sincere student of *para vidya* will ultimately make a god of you, but also says that within the human being the cosmic energy has the enumerated ignoble avenues of manifesting itself. We become victims of those forces, those inordinate desires or afflictions.

I am a well-educated human being, I am a cultured human being, I am a sophisticated human being. But if I am seized by a strong desire that I do not have the force of character to subjugate, I become a victim of that desire. The first casualty is the sense of propriety: the voice of conscience will not be stifled until I have fulfilled the desire. The force needs to be managed. And the technique of management is to utilize the four positive virtues within us in such a manner that our inordinate desires become spiritual. That is the methodology of character-building—of making a man or woman of yourself.

What does that mean? It means that if I am not alert, I may become a victim of strong desires. I may act in such a foolish and stupid manner that I cannot retrieve myself from the situation, because I am the victim of the force of an inordinate, unmanageable desire. The teacher

would say: ‘Do not lose heart; I will teach you how to utilize that ignoble force in you for a better cause.’ You have a desire, you know you are a victim of desire, you rationally analyse and choose the best object for that desire. Say, for example, you are desirous of a car to commute. You do not make an immediate decision; you keep on looking for what is best for you—you make use of your rationality. You study what brand is most suited to you, and with a conviction of rationality you fulfil your desire. You will never repent, because you have made use of your rationality, and you have satisfied yourself emotionally before you acted.

Is there an end to suffering from our inordinate, endless desire for things of the world? Is there any end to breakers falling on the shore? That is the example given. There is no end to the breakers falling on the shore. If you think you will bathe when it is as calm as your backyard swimming pool, it will never happen, you will never bathe. So the teacher said: ‘I will slowly explain to you how these so-called negative forces work in your personality making you self-centred and isolated in the world of self-centred, egocentric living. I will teach you how you can make use of the four qualities of rationality, emotionality, ingenuity, and unstoppable willpower and show you how these four positive qualities can give a turn, a twist, a change in attitude, a total change in perception of life. The ignoble qualities become indirectly helpful to manifest the Divinity in you.’ That is what Maharishi Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* has enunciated from beginning to end.

That is why the concept of yoga is catching quickly all over the world, though it has started from the physical. A healthy mind must reside in a healthy body—it is required—but it is not an end in itself. Yoga teaches you how to keep your body in perfect shape so that it functions like a

well-tuned engine, releasing the other energy. The sure sign of perfect health is to be unaware of the functioning of your body—everything works so smoothly that you are not aware that it is functioning. To achieve that is what *batha* yoga, physical yoga, is.

The Science of Breathing

Maharishi Patanjali says that the next step is *pranayama*, the science of breathing. Why? For all activities that take place within the body and brain need oxygen as fuel. We have seen that when we run, we gasp for air, we breathe quicker and deeper because the body needs more oxygen. Again, when we are emotionally traumatized, such as at the death of a near and dear one, we weep, we sob, and want more air—emotional disturbance calls for more oxygen. In anger we breathe like a pair of bellows. The teachers have seen that if you are upset bodily or emotionally, you need more oxygen.

If you can calm your body process down, you will need less oxygen. That is a fact. When you are deep in sleep, your breathing goes down; when you are awake, it goes up. *Pranayama* was a science in ancient days; they knew how to control the intake of oxygen to stabilize the functioning of the body-mind mechanism. But what has happened now? Doctors tell us that the brain alone takes 75% of our oxygen just to be awake, alert, and active. Only 25% is for the rest of the system. So without being guided properly by an experienced person, if you start controlling your breath to quieten yourself, you will not know whether you are starving your brain. If a brain is damaged, it is irreversible. So *pranayama* used to quiet, to control the mind is a very, very risky game, and it is not advised.

There are other methods of doing the same thing. You can cultivate the habit of holding your mind on one particular object of your

choice. For instance, if you are a lover of music and you enjoy listening to it, you can concentrate your mind on your listening, so that the slightest subtlety, the slightest nuance of tune, does not escape you—and you forget the world. What does this mean? It means that your mind has taken total shelter in a particular bracketed area and you are at peace with yourself, and the world has ceased to exist.

Maharishi Patanjali teaches you how to manage yourself by keeping your body in its proper posture and by placing your mind within a particular parameter where avoidable and unnecessary disturbances are not welcome. You hold your mind there. Thereby you manage yourself, not dissipating energy, and you are guided by rock-solid, crystal-clear rationality. All the not-so-admirable qualities of a human being are given a twist, a turn, for you to be able to manage the total energy within you towards your goal, your ideal, which you have the freedom to choose. If you want to excel in it, if you want to be on top of it, learn how to manage yourself, that is, to concentrate your attention on your object of choice.


Yoga teaches you how gradually, with back-breaking effort, toiling and sweating, you can manage yourself in such a way that you divert all the energy that this engine of a body-mind produces towards a particular goal. That energy will have such a piercing effect that the ignorance and darkness of the object will dissipate. You will know the secret art of mysticism, how to be one with God, how to develop a relationship with the Divine and become one with it. Any religion is fine for the purpose.

Vedanta has such an overall view that it can encompass the whole gamut of wisdom that human beings have acquired since the dawn of civilization, and is acquiring even today and will continue to acquire till the end of human civil-

ization. Vedanta has a view that will teach you how to excel in life, not to be third or fourth rate, a victim of beastly passions. Man is made in the image of God. Try to manifest that image of the Divine already within you. Somehow or other we have an imbalanced system of education that gives tremendous importance to material sciences and the study of humanities without paying any attention to man-making and character-building education. This ancient wisdom teaches you perfection and what will make you a better human being.

Now, it should be clearly understood what role the two sciences—*para vidya* and *apara vidya*—play. Material science teaches you how to improve the quality of life by mastering the forces in external nature, and spiritual sciences teach you how to improve the quality of the human personality. The improvement of the human personality does not rotate, it has an end in view: that you manage yourself in such a manner that you become one with the Divine.

Whatever religion you follow, whatever ‘ism’ you follow, you have a choice to make. The best choice to make a man of yourself is what the ancient wisdom teaches to modern man and to the postmodern era. Think of yourself. What is your contribution to the progress of human society? What direction are you going in? Can you stop yourself from being merely a biological creature and make use of your potential for change? Go and find out what is being taught in the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the books of Moses, Vedanta, the Upanishads and you will find they all speak the same language. God created this universe, saturated it with his own being, created man in his own image, and asked him to follow the dictates of his own conscience so that that voice would lead him back to heaven to enjoy eternal peace. This is where we are supposed to go. Ancient wisdom will teach you how.

Let us remind ourselves who we are, what we are, and what is our contribution to this society. 

Purification of the Mind

Meditation and concentration, japam and austerity, worship and study of the scriptures, yoga and Vedic ritual—all these actions or sadhanas are only meant for purification of the mind. And the purpose of purifying the mind is Self-realization or Self-knowledge. The mind becomes impure when it is swarming with desires and becomes pure when it is free from desires. Now the main task is to make the mind unselfish by any means—whether it is through meditation, or service, or discrimination, or devotion. Everyone has his own choice. But everybody will have to destroy the ego. And when this ‘little ego’ dissolves, one experiences the manifestation of the ‘Cosmic Ego’ or Brahman. This is called *jivan-mukti*, or

freedom while living in the body.

The grace of the Lord is always there; it is never absent. When the mind is purified, one experiences and tastes fully that divine grace. Self-knowledge is ever-existent; it has no past or future. The sun appears when the cloud is blown away. Similarly, when ignorance is removed, the self-luminous, ever-present Self manifests. People do so many things to attain this Self-knowledge, but *shraddha*, or unswerving faith, is the most important prerequisite. The Gita says, ‘He who is full of faith and zeal and has subdued his senses obtains knowledge’ [IV.39].

—*Spiritual Treasures,*
Letters of Swami Turiyananda, 152–3

Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age

Swami Bhajanananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S main work was to expound the true significance and importance of Sri Ramakrishna's great life. In the course of this work Swamiji gave a new interpretation of the avatara doctrine.

Significance of Sri Ramakrishna's Avatarahood

The significance of the avatarahood of Sri Ramakrishna cannot be considered in isolation. It has to be understood in the light of the lives and functions of other avatars, prophets, and world teachers. What are the functions of an avatara or world teacher? What role does he play in the advancement of human culture, in the spiritual elevation of humanity, in the enhancement of human welfare, in the promotion of peace, unity, and love among people? Above all, how does he help people in attaining the ultimate goal of life, in attaining salvation or liberation? Hereby some of these issues are dealt with briefly.

Avatara as Kapāla-mocana • Swami Vivekananda was once asked in a question-answer session, 'How to recognize God when He has assumed a human form?' Swamiji replied, 'One who can alter the doom of people is the Lord. No Sadhu, however advanced, can claim this unique position.'⁶ 'Avatars are Kapala-mochanas, that is, they can alter the doom of people' (323-4).

What did Swamiji mean by 'doom of people' and *kapāla-mocana*? By 'doom' Swamiji meant a person's destiny, his future life. According to

the belief held by Indian religions, a person's future is determined by his karma. Every good or bad action produces, apart from its visible physical effect in this world, an unseen cosmic effect or 'karmic residue' known as *sañcita-karma*. Patanjali, in his *Yoga Sutra*, calls it *karmāśaya*. It is 'unseen', *adṛṣṭa*, in the sense that nobody knows where *sañcita-karma* is stored. According to popular belief, it is 'written in one's *lalāta* or *kapāla*, forehead'—Vyasa, in his commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, states that *karmāśaya* is stored in a person's *buddhi*. It is the fructification or activation, *vipāka*, of *sañcita-karma* that leads to rebirth. In the next birth it comes back to the person as *prārabdha-karma*, which determines the person's birth, death, experiences, and circumstances in that life. This is what is popularly known as 'destiny' or 'doom'. It is also believed that once the *sañcita-karma* is stored no human being can change or prevent it from fructification; it *will* fructify and *will* cause rebirth.

According to Hindu belief, only God or the avatara can destroy a person's *sañcita-karma*; in that case, the person will not be born again and will be freed from the bondage to the wheel of samsara, transmigratory existence. In the case of a person who is already born, God or the avatara can modify or alter the course of his *prārabdha*. This means that if a person is destined to suffer, God alone can mitigate or prevent it. This is the reason why Swamiji described the avatara as *kapāla-mocana*, one who can 'alter another person's doom'.

Freedom from the bondage to the wheel of samsara is known as mukti, final liberation. All theistic schools hold that only Ishvara or the avatara can give this final liberation.⁷ This is what corresponds to the Christian concept of salvation. In the Bhagavadgita Sri Krishna declares: 'Those who surrender all their karmas to me and meditate on me with unswerving devotion, I lift them up out of the ocean of transmigratory existence.'⁸ Krishna gives this assurance to Arjuna: 'Give up all your obligations and take refuge in me alone; I will liberate you from all your sins (and their consequences); grieve not' (18.66). Christ gave a similar assurance: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'⁹ Only an avatara can give this kind of divine assurance.

According to Swami Vivekananda, it is this power to give ultimate Liberation that is the chief characteristic of the avatara. And it was the faith that Sri Ramakrishna was endowed with this power that made him accept and declare Sri Ramakrishna as the avatara of the present age. In fact, Swamiji begins his magnificent vesper hymn with the words, '*Khaṇḍana-bhava-bandhana ... vandi tomāy; O, breaker of bonds ... we adore thee!*'

How does the avatara break the bonds of the jivas? Swamiji has indicated this in the two lines that form the climax of the vesper hymn. Bonds of samsara are not like ropes; they are nothing but different forms of ignorance. The avatara removes the darkness of ignorance from the core of the heart by illuminating it with the light of knowledge: *jyotira jyoti ujala hṛdikandara; tumi tamabhanjanhār*. In the Gita Sri Krishna also states: 'Out of compassion for them alone, I, residing in their hearts, destroy the darkness of ignorance with the brilliant lamp of knowledge.'¹⁰

The Avatara as the Door to the Infinite • We have seen that the main function of the avatara

is to give liberation to those who look to him for help. To fulfil this function the avatara must serve as a door to the absolute Reality on the one hand, and should be accessible to all people in the relative world on the other. This means he should occupy a position between the Absolute and the relative, the *nitya* and the *lila*, as Sri Ramakrishna put it. During the latter half of his life on earth, Sri Ramakrishna dwelt habitually at this borderland, which he described as *bhāva* or *bhāvamukha*.

After attaining the realization of the non-dual impersonal Nirguna Brahman and remaining in that state for nearly six months, when he returned to the ordinary world, he continued to have visions of the personal God, Saguna Brahman, in various forms. Then, the Divine Mother appeared to him and gave this command: 'Do thou remain in bhava.'¹¹ Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who calls this state *bhāvamukha*, has given a detailed explanation of it. According to him:

It is the universal I-ness existing between the aspects of Saguna and Nirguna that is called Bhavamukha. ... This universal I is the I of Isvara [God] or the Mother. In their attempt to describe the nature of this immense I, the Vaishnava teachers of Bengal have called it the divine Sri Krishna, the embodiment of pure consciousness, which is of the nature of an 'inconceivable difference in non-difference (Achintya-bhedabheda)'¹²

Sri Ramakrishna identified himself with this universal 'I', which he called 'ripe I'. All individual 'I'-s or egos, which he called 'unripe I', are false manifestations of the one real, supreme, universal 'I'. In that state of *bhāvamukha*, 'the world appeared to him as an "immense mind" in which innumerable waves of ideas were rising, surging and merging' (543).

In his *Yoga Sutra*, Patanjali states: 'To a yogi who is established in the realization of the distinction between *puruṣa* and *buddhi* come omnipotence and omniscience.'¹³ If this can be true in the case of a human yogi, how much more it should be in the case of a divine personality like the avatara.

Throughout the Gita Sri Krishna is referred to as Bhagavan. Acharya Shankara, in his commentary on the Gita, quotes a passage from the *Vishnu Purana* to indicate the meaning of the term Bhagavan: 'A person who knows the creation and dissolution of the universe, the coming and going of beings, and their knowledge and ignorance, is called Bhagavan.'¹⁴ Swami Vivekananda added the appellation 'Bhagavan' to the name of Sri Ramakrishna. Moreover, he composed a hymn in Sanskrit each line of which begins with the first letter of the salutatory mantra *Om namo bhagavate rāmakṛṣṇāya*. The hymn is an expression of the soul's total surrender to the Divine Master.

The whole cultus, tradition of worship and adoration, of Sri Ramakrishna, which is now the main spiritual power sustaining and holding together the whole Ramakrishna movement, is based on the faith that Sri Ramakrishna, by his intense spiritual practices and experiences, has opened a new doorway to salvation or liberation, and that by his grace anyone can attain it. In the New Testament Jesus speaks of himself as the door to salvation. He says, 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'¹⁵

Sri Ramakrishna gave a similar example to explain the role of an incarnation. He said:

Take the case of a man who stands by a wall on both sides of which there are meadows stretching to infinity. If there is a hole in the wall, through it he can see everything on the other

side. ... The ego of Incarnations and Ishvara-kotis is like the wall with a hole. Though they remain on this side of the wall, still they can see the endless meadow on the other side. That is to say, though they have a human body, they are always united with God. ... And if the hole is big enough, they can go through it and come back again.¹⁶

Sri Ramakrishna was obviously referring to his own life here. On another occasion, after giving the same illustration, he asked a disciple, 'Tell me what that hole is'. When the disciple answered, 'You are that hole', he was very much pleased (826).

The Avatara as the Revelation of the Noumen • In the Gita the main purpose of God's descent as avatara is stated to be 'protection of the virtuous and destruction of the wicked.'¹⁷ In the present-day world this idea does not seem to have much relevance. As a matter of fact, some of the great medieval commentators themselves have expressed the view that destruction of the wicked cannot be regarded as the primary purpose of God's incarnation. Madhvacharya states that God can punish the wicked even without taking birth. According to him, God's incarnation is a part of his lila, divine sport. Earlier to Madhva, Ramanuja also held that destruction of the wicked can be only of secondary importance, for God is compassionate even to his enemies. According to Ramanuja, the primary purpose of God's incarnation is '*ārādhyā svarūpa pradarśana*'; to reveal an adorable form'.

In the socio-religious context of today, Ramanuja's idea that the main purpose of God's incarnation is to reveal himself through his adorable divine image seems to be quite relevant. The world is now in need of a new theanthropic idea, that is, an anthropomorphic representation of God that is in harmony with the norms, ideals,

and ethos of contemporary society. Especially in India there has been a long-felt need for a new spiritual ideal, the divine form of a new *iṣṭa devatā*, Chosen Deity, whom people can adore as their own, and with whom they can establish a deeply personal relationship.

The days of kings and royal splendour are over, not only in the secular realm but in the religious realm as well. The modern world needs a new paradigm of spiritual life centred on a new theanthropic template. Especially in India there has been a long-standing need for an incarnation of God who belongs to the common people, lives their life, understands them, and gives them unconditional love irrespective of the distinctions created by wealth, caste, sect, religion, region, or race. Sri Ramakrishna has fulfilled this need.

In this context Swami Vivekananda's prophetic words are worth quoting. 'And as the sure pledge of this glorious future, the all-merciful Lord has manifested in the present age, as stated above, an incarnation which in point of completeness in revelation, its synthetic harmonising of all ideals, and its promoting of every sphere of spiritual culture, surpasses the manifestation of all past ages.'¹⁸

The significance of God's assuming a human form as the avatar is that it is a means of revelation of the noumenon. As stated by the nineteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, reality

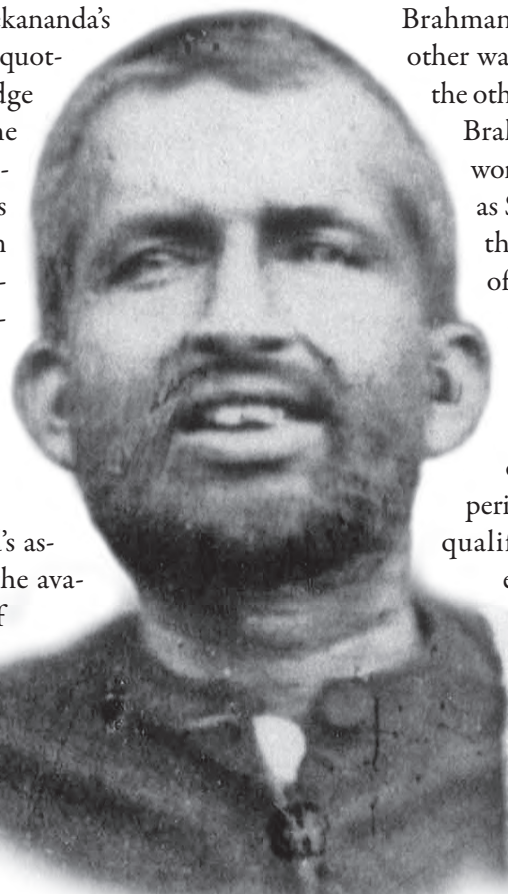
has two aspects: a manifested aspect, which can be perceived by the senses and is known as phenomenon, and an unmanifested aspect, which is beyond sense perception and is known as the noumenon. According to Kant, the noumenon, which is the 'thing-in-itself', can never be known. In Vedanta noumenon refers to Brahman, which is beyond ordinary thought and speech. If Brahman is absolutely transcendent, then how can we know about Brahman at all? The answer is, although Brahman cannot be perceived *directly as an object*, Brahman reveals itself to all people in three ways. In the first place, everyone knows that oneself exists; no one can doubt one's own existence. This self-evident direct experience needs no proof. According to Acharya Shankara, this experience has its source in Brahman.¹⁹

Brahman also reveals itself in two other ways: one through words and the other through forms or images.

Brahman's revelation through words constitutes what is known as Shrutis. The Upanishads are the records of Shrutis. Most of the statements in the Upanishads give only indirect knowledge of Brahman.

But there are a few mantras known as *mahāvākyas* that can give rise to the direct experience of Brahman in a highly qualified person. This direct experience of Brahman produced by words

is known as *śabda-aparokṣa*, direct experience [of Brahman] through words.



The third way Brahman reveals itself is through avatars. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Seeing an Incarnation of God is the same as seeing God Himself.'²⁰ One day Narendra argued with Girish, the famous dramatist of Bengal, that God being infinite it is not possible to know all of God. Coming to know of this Sri Ramakrishna remarked: 'What need is there to know everything about God? It is enough if we only realize Him. And we see God Himself if we but see His Incarnation. Suppose a person goes to the Ganges and touches its water. He will then say, "Yes, I have seen and touched the Ganges." To say this it is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of the river from Hardwar to Gangasagar' (725–6).

Almost a similar idea occurs in the New Testament. A disciple of Jesus by name Philip one day told him, 'Lord, show us the Father [the Godhead] and it sufficeth us.' In reply Jesus told him, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the father?'²¹

The Avatara as Iṣṭa Devatā • The concept of *iṣṭa devatā* is one of the features of Hinduism that distinguishes it from all other religions. Hinduism's capacity to accommodate diverse creeds, cults, and sects within its fold as well as its capacity to accommodate other religions and even secular philosophies is chiefly due to the fact that the whole Hindu outlook on life is based on the principle of unity in diversity. The concept of *iṣṭa devatā* is a symbolic expression of this principle of unity in diversity.

The concept of *iṣṭa devatā* is the faith that God, although one, can assume several forms, and every person has the freedom to choose any of these forms in accordance with his or her temperament and spiritual inclination. The form of God that a person chooses—it may be that of

an eternal divinity like Shiva, Vishnu, Saraswati, Kali or an avatara like Rama, Krishna, and others—is known as that person's *iṣṭa devatā*, which literally means the god or goddess that is desired, cherished, or chosen. The Chosen Deity is adored either as the Supreme Deity or as a manifestation of the Supreme Godhead. But what is more important is the intensely personal relationship one establishes with that particular form of God. The Chosen Deity becomes one's all in all, dominating one's thoughts, emotions, outlook, relationships with other people, and actions. This idea has been graphically expressed in a beautiful song 'Thou art my All in All, O Lord!', which Swami Vivekananda used to sing before Sri Ramakrishna.²²

The origin of the concept of *iṣṭa devatā* may be traced to Vedic times. The Vedic Aryans worshipped several deities such as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Aditya, Vishnu, Rudra, and others. This does not, however, mean that Vedic religion was polytheistic, for the Vedic sages also realized that all these divinities were the manifestations of one Supreme Godhead. This understanding found expression in the famous Vedic dictum '*Ekam-sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*'; Truth is one, sages call It by different names'.²³ The nineteenth-century orientalist Max Müller called this principle 'Henotheism', which the Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines as 'The worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods'.

The *iṣṭa devatā* is not a mere symbol of the Supreme God, but its real manifestation. Sri Ramakrishna has repeatedly stressed that 'God with form is as real as God without form',²⁴ and has also explained the relation between the forms of God and the formless God in the following way: 'Do you know what I mean? Satchidananda is like an infinite ocean. Intense cold freezes the water into ice, which floats on the ocean in blocks of various forms. Likewise, through the

cooling influence of bhakti, one sees forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. These forms are meant for the bhaktas, the lovers of God. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts; it becomes the same water it was before' (191).

In Bengal Vaishnavism the form of Sri Krishna is regarded as eternal. According to this school, the highest transcendental level of Reality is the eternal abode of Sri Krishna, which is of the nature of pure Consciousness. In that eternal abode the eternal Krishna is eternally engaged in his eternal *rāsa-līlā*, divine sport. The ultimate goal of spiritual life for a Vaishnava devotee is not mukti, but the everlasting experience of the transcendental joy of eternal participation in this eternal divine sport. Confirming this Sri Ramakrishna said: 'It can't be said that bhaktas need Nirvāna. According to some books there is an eternal Krishna and there are also His eternal devotees. Krishna is Spirit embodied, and His Abode also is Spirit embodied. Krishna is eternal and the devotees are also eternal' (779). Sri Ramakrishna explains this transcendental experience by extending his illustration of water and ice: 'But you may say that for certain devotees God assumes eternal forms. There are places in the ocean where the ice doesn't melt at all. It assumes the form of quartz' (191).

Another spiritual principle associated with the concept of *iṣṭa devatā* is *iṣṭa mantra*. Every *iṣṭa devatā*, whether a deity or an avatara, has his or her own mantra. What is a mantra? It is a special combination of words with the power to reveal the transcendental aspect of a deity. These mantras are revealed to seers in the depths of contemplation.

Why have we discussed this topic here? The reason is that Sri Ramakrishna has been accepted as the *iṣṭa devatā* by hundreds of thousands of people, and what we have written above about *iṣṭa devatā* applies to Sri Ramakrishna as

well. Mantras pertaining to him have also been evolved and are being widely used. All avatars or incarnations are regarded as divine, as manifestations of the Supreme Godhead. In fact, this is what distinguishes an avatara in Hinduism or incarnation in Christianity from a prophet. A prophet only reveals transcendental truths about God, but is not himself regarded as divine; he is a messenger of God and is far superior to the ordinary run of humankind.

Any discussion on the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna must necessarily take into account his status as *iṣṭa devatā*. This aspect of his real nature is not thrust upon people by dint of authority. The acceptance of Sri Ramakrishna as *iṣṭa devatā* by people is a spontaneous response based on some vague intuitive perception they themselves may not understand.

Om Hrīm Ṛtam • Swami Vivekananda opens his Sanskrit hymn on Sri Ramakrishna with these three words. Here the word 'Om' stands for the infinite, universal dimension of Brahman—as both the impersonal, Nirguna, and the personal, Saguna.


When seen through the narrow channels of human understanding, the undifferentiated universal dimension of Brahman appears to be differentiated into certain divine entities or deities. These differentiated, *khaṇḍa*, aspects of Brahman are symbolized by certain cryptic words known collectively as 'seed', *bīja*. It is this *khaṇḍa* form of Brahman that assumes the anthropomorphic forms of various gods and goddesses such as Shiva, Kali, Vishnu, and others. This means that each deity has his or her own *bīja*. One of the most universal and powerful *bīja* is *hrīm*, which represents the universal Mother-Power, *matṛ-śakti*. Sri Ramakrishna was the embodiment of this Mother-Power; hence Swamiji has used *hrīm* to indicate the spiritual power of Sri Ramakrishna.

Speaking about the *akhaṇḍa* and *khaṇḍa* aspects of Brahman, Swami Vivekananda says: 'And as Om represents the Akhaṇḍa, the undifferentiated Brahman, the others [*bījas*] represent the Khaṇḍa or the differentiated views of the same Being; and they are all helpful to divine meditation and the acquisition of true knowledge.'²⁵

The third word *ṛtam* etymologically means 'truth'. In the Vedas it is used in the sense of cosmic order governing the universe. This cosmic order has several dimensions—physical, moral, social, and spiritual. That is to say, all the physical laws, moral laws, social laws, and spiritual laws are manifestations of one great universal cosmic order known as *ṛtam*. In this sense it is similar to the ancient Greek idea of Logos and the ancient Chinese idea of Tao. In the post-Vedic period the word *ṛtam* came to be replaced by the word 'dharma'.

Virtuous life means to live in harmony with *ṛtam*; violation of *ṛtam* is vice. This shows that by *ṛtam* is meant the true way of life, *ṛtapath*, as Swamiji himself has put it. By identifying Sri Ramakrishna with *ṛtam* what Swamiji has implied is that Sri Ramakrishna is the true way to the Divine, the direct means, *upāya*, of realizing God.²⁶

According to Ramanuja, the means of realizing God is of two kinds: *siddhopāya* and *sādhyopāya*. By *siddhopāya* is meant the 'ever-available perfect means'. This is a direct path. According to Ramanuja, God's grace is the *siddhopāya*; it is not created by man and it is always available to all people. By *sādhyopāya* is meant the 'means which is to be achieved through effort, which involves human effort'. This effort includes purification, prayer, worship, meditation, and other practices. It is an indirect path. Sri Ramakrishna is obviously the *siddhopāya* of the present age. This is the essential meaning of *Om hrīm ṛtam*.

In the Bengali vesper hymn 'Khandana-bhava-bandhana' Swami Vivekananda has described Sri Ramakrishna as the Goal, whereas in the Sanskrit hymn 'Om Hrim Ritam' he has described Sri Ramakrishna as the Way. 

Notes and References

6. *Complete Works*, 5.325.
7. According to Advaita Vedanta, both karma and karmic residue, *sañcita-karma*, are only products of *ajñāna* or *avidya*, ignorance. When the primordial causal ignorance, *kāraṇa-ajñāna* or *mūla-avidyā*, is destroyed by the knowledge of Brahman, *sañcita-karma* automatically gets destroyed and the person attains final liberation; this alone is true mukti.
8. Bhagavadgita, 12.6–7.
9. Matthew, 11.28.
10. Bhagavadgita, 10.11.
11. *Gospel*, 175.
12. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2010), 544.
13. *Sattva-puruṣāṇyatā-khyāti-mātrasya sarva-bhāvādhiṣṭhātṛtvaṁ sarva-jñātṛtvaṁ ca*. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 3.50.
14. *Utpattim pralayaṁ caiva bhūtānām-āgatim gatim. Vetti vidyām-avidyām ca sa vācya bhagavān-iti*. *Vishnu Purana*, 6.5.78, quoted by Acharya Shankara in his commentary on Gita 3.36.
15. John, 10.9.
16. *Gospel*, 760.
17. Bhagavadgita, 4.8.
18. *Complete Works*, 6.185.
19. *Sarvo hyātmāstitvaṁ pratyeti... ātmā ca brahma*. Acharya Shankara's commentary on *Brahma Sutra*, 1.1.1.
20. *Gospel*, 186.
21. John, 14.8–9.
22. 'Nātha Tumi Sarvasva Āmār', composed by Trailokyanath Sanyal, the famous poet and singer of Brahmo Samaj. See *Gospel*, 207.
23. *Rig Veda*, 1.164.46.
24. *Gospel*, 217.
25. *Complete Works*, 3.59.
26. Cf. Christ's statement: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' John, 14.6.

Understanding Bhāvamukha: Sri Ramakrishna's Unique State of Consciousness

Swami Atmapriyananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S grand unification scheme of the different yogas is rooted in and based on the *nitya-līlā* realization of Sri Ramakrishna. In a remarkable letter to Alasinga he wrote: 'The dry, abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.'¹⁴ To E T Sturdy he wrote: 'I want to give them dry, hard reason, softened in the sweetest syrup of love and made spicy with intense work, and cooked in the kitchen of Yoga, so that even a baby can easily digest it' (5.104).

The *vijñānī* epitomizes the beautiful blend of the *para-jñāna*, supreme knowledge, of the seer of the Absolute, the *nitya*, and the *parā-bhakti* of the sage enjoying the bliss of the immanent personal God of love. There is a wonderful hymn by Pramada Das Mitra which describes this fusion of jnana and bhakti in Sri Ramakrishna:

*Vijñāna-pīyūṣa-nimagna-mūrtiḥ
pasparśa yān yān dayayā kareṇa;
Te kāmīnī-kāncana-rikta-cittāḥ
sadyo babbhūvur-bhuvi rāmakṛṣṇaḥ.
Premābdhi-gambhīra-taraṅga-bhaṅgair-
āṇdolito yo bhagavad-vilīnaḥ;
Bhaktir-viśuddhā svayam-āvir-āsīt*

*puṁ-vigraho'ho bhuvi rāmakṛṣṇaḥ.
Tam-adbhutaṁ kañcid-acintya-śaktiṁ
vande praśāntaṁ paripūrṇa-bodham;
Jñānasya bhakteśca viśuddha-mūrtiṁ
dvi-mūrtim-ekaṁ bhuvi rāmakṛṣṇam.*

Whosoever Ramakrishna, embodied on earth and immersed in the nectar of *vijñāna*, compassionately touches with his hands, becomes instantly free from all mental attachment to lust and lucre. That male frame merged in God-consciousness and tossed about by the waves breaking forth in the profound ocean of *prema* (divine love) is nothing but unalloyed bhakti manifesting itself as Ramakrishna. I bow down to Ramakrishna, a wondrous and incomprehensible power, tranquil and brimming with divine awareness, an immaculate dual image of jnana and bhakti (manifest) on earth.

Bhāvamukha and the Ramakrishna Mission Ideology

The avatars remain in the state of *bhāvamukha* expressing through their lives and teachings, and through the tradition they initiate and head, the *ānanda* aspect of the Reality, the infinite bliss of God. The avatara, remaining in *bhāvamukha*, transacts with the relative world out of motiveless compassion, *ahaitukī karuṇā*, with his being fully immersed all the while in the absolute Brahman. Remaining in *bhāvamukha*, the avatara becomes as it were the *pañca-mukhī*, five-faced,

Shiva, the upward-looking face, *ūrdhva-vaktra*, drawing light and power from the transcendent Absolute, the pure Being beyond the world of relativity, and transmitting this power out of compassion on all sides—represented by the four faces facing the four directions—to the world of relativity, the world of becoming. The avatara, stationed in *bhāvamukha*, thus balances the two: being and becoming, absolute and relative, transcendent and immanent. This balancing is similar to what is known in physics as ‘saddle point equilibrium’. The One, the Absolute, and the many, the relative, are no longer opposed or antagonistic; instead, they are seen as the *nitya* and the *lilā* aspects of the same Reality; the divine interplay between the two marks the compassionate mission of the avatara for the good of the world, *loka kalyāṇa*. Therefore, the spiritual tradition that the Ramakrishna avatara has set in motion—the Ramakrishna Mission, or more broadly, the Ramakrishna movement—has this *nitya-lilā* blend as its ideal. This is reflected in the motto Swami Vivekananda chose for the Order: ‘*Ātmano-mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*; for one’s own liberation and the welfare of the world.’ Making this *nitya-lilā* realization of the avatara, Sri Ramakrishna in *bhāvamukha* as a vibrant and living practical force in the modern world, was the great mission accomplished by Swami Vivekananda. His own declaration of this unique and new contribution to the Indian spiritual tradition may be recalled in this context: ‘What Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I have added to this [the Hindu and Buddhist traditions] is, that the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes’ (8.261).

This complete and holistic vision combines the global and the local in a unique way. This inimitable vision is more a theme for reverential meditation and inward feeling than of intellec-

tual understanding or analytical reasoning. This synthesis of local and global perspectives—locally serious and globally mirthful—is the state of *bhāvamukha* in which Sri Ramakrishna and other avatars dwelt. While one is ‘in’ the play, one is to play with all seriousness. This is the local locus. But the global vision of the ‘entire’ play as great fun is the cosmic focus. Being focused in the cosmos, this global vision gives the power to look on the entire play with perfect detachment, absolute equanimity, and childlike joy. The realization of this intermingling, the coexistence of order and chaos—in fact, the emergence of order from chaos—endows us with a unique *weltanschauung*, world view that releases us from the bondage of thought, the network of conceptualization. Readers who are aware of researches in chaos and the close interlinking of order and chaos would know the beauty of both.¹⁵ Once this new vision opens up, life becomes full of meaning, because it is only then that one realizes the utter futility of the search for a meaning in it! Meaningful life would then melt away into a life of joyful meaninglessness! Rather, it would become a life of real fullness, *pūrṇatva*, for it is lived in the lap of the perfect balance of meaningfulness and meaninglessness. No thoughts, no past or future, no wants, no desires—perfect stillness.

Sister Nivedita’s interpretation of the above statement of Swami Vivekananda—as the fusion of jnana and bhakti, and their beautiful blend issuing out in karma for the welfare of the world—may also be recalled in this context:

It must never be forgotten that it was the Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita Philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last-named constitutes the

goal. This is part and parcel of the still greater and more simple doctrine that the many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes; or as Sri Ramakrishna expressed the same thing, 'God is both with form and without form. And He is that which includes both form and formlessness.'

It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life itself is religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jnana and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. 'Art, science, and religion,' he said once, 'are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita.'¹⁶

Psychological 'Simulation' of Bhāvamukha

The spiritual tradition of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda envisions that each one of the followers of this tradition would try to live the ideal of *bhāvamukha* and approximate to it as much as his or her spiritual advancement would allow.

This psychological 'simulation' of the spiritual content of Sri Ramakrishna's *bhāvamukha* is the sadhana that each one of the followers of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition is called upon to perform.¹⁷ This is the meaning of the 'meditation on the heart of Ramakrishna' as taught in the *Yoga Sutra: vīta-rāga-viśayam vā cittam*,¹⁸ literally translated as 'or (by meditation on) the heart that has given up all attachment to sense-objects'. Commenting on this aphorism Swami Vivekananda says: 'Take some holy person, some great person whom you revere, some saint whom you know to be perfectly non-attached, and think of his heart. That heart has become non-attached, and meditate on that heart; it will calm the mind.'¹⁹ This is the meaning of Swami Vivekananda's exhortation to Sri Ramakrishna's followers to cast themselves in the 'mould of Sri Ramakrishna'. One remarkable example of this process of 'simulation' in spiritual sadhana is provided by Acharya Shankara in his commentary on the Gita:

Sarvatraiva hy-adhyātma-śāstre kṛtārtha-lakṣaṇāni yāni tāny-eva sādhanāny-upadiśyante yatna-sādhyatvāt. Yāni yatna-sādhyāni sādhanāni lakṣaṇāni ca bhavanti tāni.


Everywhere in the spiritual scriptures, the very characteristics of a person who has attained fulfilment [through spiritual realization] are taught to be the means of sadhana, as these are attainable through practice and effort. [Thus], those [states] that are attainable through practice and effort, verily become means of sadhana [for a spiritual aspirant or sadhaka] as well as the [natural] characteristics [of a person who has attained to realization].²⁰

This is the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's own exhortation that Swami Vivekananda called practical Advaitism: 'First tie the knowledge of nonduality in a corner of your cloth, then do as you please.'²¹

Swami Ramakrishnananda, a monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who undoubtedly knew Sri Ramakrishna's mission only too well, once made a stunning statement: 'Ramakrishna Mission is that which has produced a Ramakrishna.'²² The meaning is that the Ramakrishna Mission can produce all-round characters harmonizing jnana, bhakti, karma, and yoga; characters cast in the mould of Sri Ramakrishna, with minds and hearts so refined, so elevated and tuned to the wavelength of Sri Ramakrishna's own mind and heart that they can live and operate at the level of Sri Ramakrishna, simulating the *bhāvamukha* ideal in their own lives.

On this sacred occasion, when Sri Ramakrishna's followers are celebrating the hundred and seventy-fifth birth anniversary of the Master, the one sadhana that we ought to reverentially take up in all humility is the attempt at a psychological simulation of Sri Ramakrishna's *bhāvamukha* ideal, through meditation on the mind and heart of Sri Ramakrishna, merging our own minds in our hearts, *mano hydi nirud-dhya*,²³ and pouring out this mind-heart fusion to Sri Ramakrishna as an offering to realize his true being as abiding in *bhāvamukha*. This realization should come through the fusion of 'the heart, the higher intuition, and the mind'—*hṛdā manīṣā manasā'bhikṛptaḥ*.²⁴ This is a sadhana that, in the present age, brings individual fulfilment and collective good.

This sadhana conduces to the realization of the ideal of the Ramakrishna Mission spoken about by Swami Ramakrishnananda; an ideal that is also described, succinctly but eloquently, in the Order's motto by Swami Vivekananda, who poetically and artistically recreated the same ideal in the Order's emblem. These are two great gifts of Swami Vivekananda to the modern world—the motto and the emblem of the Ramakrishna Mission. The motto is a great mantra

for repetition and realization; the emblem is a great symbol for meditation and illumination. This non-traditional and unconventional *japa-dhyāna*, supplemented and reinforced, invigorated and energized by the traditional and conventional *mantra-japa* and *rūpa-dhyāna*, is a holistic sadhana for the modern age. Blessed is the person who realizes the true significance of this modern sadhana and whose entire being joyfully gets attuned to its practice through a new awakening in consciousness. 

Notes and References

14. *Complete Works*, 5.104–5.
15. See, for example, Ilya Prigogine, *Order out of Chaos* (Shambhala, 1984).
16. See Introduction to *Complete Works*, Vol I. xv–xvi.
17. The word 'simulation', which is normally understood as meaning pretence or feigning, sham or counterfeit, has gained much currency, however, in the world of computer science and computer modelling, as in 'computer simulation' to mean a very different thing. The Google Dictionary gives the following as one of the meanings of the word 'simulation': produce a computer model of, as in the example: future population changes were simulated by computer. Merriam-Webster dictionary gives the following meanings, apart from the usual meanings mentioned earlier, (a) the imitative representation of the functioning of one system or process by means of the functioning of another, as for example: a computer simulation of an industrial process, (b) examining of a problem often not subject to direct experimentation by means of a simulating device. In the world of sadhana, this could be used as meaning meditation.
18. Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, 1.37.
19. *Complete Works*, 1.227.
20. Acharya Shankara's commentary on Gita, 2.55.
21. *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, 907.
22. P Ramalinga Sastry, 'Reminiscences of Swami Ramakrishnananda', *Vedanta Kesari*, 41/8 (August 1954), 89.
23. Gita, 8.12.
24. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.3.9.

Sri Ramakrishna on Himself

Compiled by Mohit Ranjan Das

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE DEVOTIONAL SCRIPTURES SAY that when nineteen kinds of bhava [emotion or mood] for God manifest together in one person, it is called mahabhava. An ordinary man takes a whole lifetime to practise one bhava before he achieves perfection in it. All nineteen spiritual emotions are fully manifested here (*pointing to his own body*).¹⁹

Vedanta Sadhana

‘Once I fell into the clutches of a jnani (referring to Totapuri, the Naked One), who made me listen to Vedanta for eleven months.’²⁰

‘After initiating me into sannyasa, the Naked One began to teach me various established truths of Vedanta and asked me to withdraw my mind from all objects and dive into the Atman. But despite all my attempts, during meditation I could not cross the realm of name and form and bring my mind to the unconditioned state. I had no difficulty in withdrawing my mind from all objects except one: the all-too-familiar form of the Blissful Mother, radiant with Pure Consciousness, that appeared before me as a living reality and prevented me from passing beyond the realm of name and form. For more than three days this happened again and again when I tried to meditate according to the instructions of Vedanta. I almost lost hope of reaching nirvikalpa samadhi. I opened my eyes and told the Naked One: “No, it can’t be done. I cannot raise my mind to the unconditioned state and force it to be absorbed in the Atman.” Irritated, the Naked One said sharply: “What

do you mean—can’t be done? It must be done!” Then he looked around the hut and found a bit of broken glass. He picked it up and stuck its needle-sharp point between my eyebrows and said, “Fix the mind here.” I sat down to meditate again, firmly determined. As soon as the form of the Divine Mother appeared in my mind, I used my discrimination as a sword of knowledge and with it mentally cut that form into two. Then all distinctions disappeared from my mind, and it swiftly soared beyond the realm of name and form. I lost myself in samadhi.’²¹

‘At the sight of my samadhi under the madhavi vine, he was quite taken aback and exclaimed, “Ah! What is this?” Then he came to know who resides in this body. He said to me, “Please let me go.” At these words I went into an ecstatic mood and said, ‘You cannot go till I realize the Truth of Vedanta.

‘Day and night I lived with him. We talked only Vedanta.’²²

‘But he couldn’t altogether destroy the seed of bhakti in me. No matter where my mind wandered, it would come back to the Divine Mother’ (779).

‘Once I sang for Nangta at the Panchavati: “To arms! To arms, O man! Death storms your house in battle array.” I sang another: “O Mother, I have no one else to blame: Alas! I sink in the well these very hands have dug” (357).

‘Whenever I sang of Her, Nangta would weep and say, “Ah! What is this?” You see, he was such a great jnani and still he wept’ (779).

Practice of Islam

‘It (Islam) too is a path to attain God. The infinitely sportive Divine Mother has shown Herself to many people through this sadhana too. I must see how She fulfills the aspirations of the followers of this path. I shall take initiation from Govinda and practise this path of Islam.’²³

‘I then devoutly repeated the holy name of Allah dressed like the Muslims, and said their prayers several times a day. Because the Hindu feeling had disappeared from my mind altogether, I felt disinclined to visit the Hindu deities, much less to bow down to them. I spent three days in that mood, and I had the full realization of the sadhana of their faith’ (ibid.).

Pilgrimage

‘(In Varanasi) I saw a tall white figure with tawny matted hair steadily approach each funeral pyre in turn, carefully raise each individual soul from its cast-off body, and whisper into its ear the particular name of Brahman that liberates a soul.

Seated on the opposite side of the pyre, the all-powerful Divine Mother Kali untied the gross, subtle, and causal knots of bondage created by each individual soul, thus sending the soul to the Absolute by opening the gate of liberation. Lord Vishwanath was blessing those souls by bestowing in an instant the experience of nondual, infinite bliss that people can attain only after ages of concentration and austerity’ (610).

‘I found in him (Trailanga Swami) the living manifestation of Vishwanath. Varanasi was sanctified and made vibrant by his presence. He was in an exalted state of knowledge. He had no body-consciousness: The sand there gets so hot in the sun that no one can walk on it, but he lay on it comfortably. I cooked rice pudding and brought it with me to feed him. At that time he couldn’t speak to me because he had taken a vow of silence. So I asked him by signs whether God was one or many. He replied in the same manner, indicating that God is known to be one when a person enters into the state of samadhi; but as long as there is any consciousness of I, you, jiva, and the world, God is perceived as many. I pointed to him and told Hriday, “In him you see the condition of a true knower of Brahman”’ (612).

‘A person dying in Benares sees the vision of Siva. Siva says to him: “This is My aspect with form, My embodiment in maya. I assume this form for the sake of the devotees. Now look. I am merging in the indivisible Satchidananda!” Uttering these words, Siva withdraws His form and enables the dying person to see Brahman.’²⁴

‘I went to Benares with Mathur Babu. Our boat was passing the Manikarnika Ghat on the Ganges, when suddenly I had a vision of Siva. I stood near the edge of the boat and went into samadhi. The boatman, fearing that I might fall into the water, cried to Hriday: “Catch hold of him! Catch hold of him!” I saw Siva standing on that ghat, embodying in Himself all the ser-

Kamandalu, made of brass, used by Sri Ramakrishna



iousness of the world. At first I saw Him standing at a distance; then I saw Him approaching me. At last He merged in me.

‘Another time, in an ecstatic mood, I saw that a sannyasi was leading me by the hand. We entered a temple and I had a vision of Annapurna made of gold’ (803).

‘Once I went with Mathur to Raja Babu’s drawing room in Benares. I found that they talked there only of worldly matters—money, real estate, and the like. At this I burst into tears. I said to the Divine Mother, weeping: “Mother! Where hast Thou brought me? I was much better off at Dakshineswar.” In Allahabad I noticed the same things that I saw elsewhere—the same ponds, the same grass, the same trees, the same tamarind-leaves.

‘But one undoubtedly finds inspiration in a holy place. I accompanied Mathur Babu to Vrindavan’ (129).

‘I loved the atmosphere of Vrindavan’ (130). ‘The moment I came to the Dhruva Ghat at Mathura, in a flash I saw Vasudeva crossing the Jamuna with Krishna in his arms.

‘One evening I was taking a stroll on the beach of the river. There were small thatched huts on the beach and big plum-trees. It was the ‘cow-dust’ hour. The cows were returning from the pasture, raising dust with their hoofs. I saw them fording the river. Then came some cowherd boys crossing the river with their cows. No sooner did I behold this scene than I cried out, “O Krishna, where are You?” and became unconscious. ...

‘At Syamakunda and Radhakunda I saw the holy men living in small mud huts. Facing away from the road lest their eyes should fall on men, they were engaged in spiritual discipline. One should visit the “Twelve Grove”.



Hubble-bubble, made of coconut shell and wooden pipe, used by Sri Ramakrishna

‘I went into samadhi at the sight of the image of Bankuvihari. In that state I wanted to touch it. I did not want to visit Govindaji twice. At Mathura I dreamt of Krishna as the cowherd boy. Hriday and Mathur Babu had the same dream’ (361–2).

‘I forgot everything when I went to Vraja. I thought that I would never return to Dakshineswar. But after a few days I remembered my mother, and I realized that she would suffer and grieve for me. Who would look after her and serve her in her advanced age? When this thought arose in my mind, I could no longer stay there.’²⁵

‘I went to Navadwip with Mathur. I thought that if Chaitanya were an avatar, there must be some signs of his manifestation, and that I would recognize them. I looked around with a view to seeing his divine manifestation and visited the deities in the houses of Senior Gosain and Junior Gosain, but found nothing. Everywhere I saw wooden images of Chaitanya standing with raised arms. I felt dejected and wondered why I had come. When I was about to board the boat to return, I had a wonderful vision of two beautiful teenaged boys (Chaitanya and Nityananda). I had never seen such beauty before. Their complexions were as bright as molten gold and they had halos round their heads. Smiling, they rushed towards me through the air, their arms raised. Immediately I cried out: “Here they come! Here they come!” No sooner



Hand fan, made of palm leaf, used by Sri Ramakrishna

had I uttered those words than they came near and entered here (*pointing to his body*), and I fell down, unconscious. I would have fallen into the water, but Hriday was nearby and caught hold of me. Thus, I was shown many such things and became convinced that Chaitanya was a true avatar, a manifestation of divine power' (620).

Revelation and Realization

'Mathur ... described his wonderful vision. He said: "Father, I was watching you just now as you walked back and forth. I saw it distinctly: As you walked towards me, you were no longer yourself. You were the Divine Mother Kali from the temple! Then, as you turned around and walked in the opposite direction, you became Lord Shiva! At first I thought it was some kind of optical illusion. I rubbed my eyes and looked again, but I saw the same thing. As often as I looked I saw it!" He said this again and again, crying. I said, "But I know nothing about this." He ignored me. I became very nervous. I thought that if someone reported this to Rani Rasmani, she might misunderstand and think that I had put a spell on Mathur. I consoled him in various ways and finally calmed him down. Was it for nothing that

Mathur served me and loved me so much? The Divine Mother granted him various visions and experiences on many occasions. It was written in Mathur's horoscope that his Ishta [Chosen Deity] would always be gracious to him—nay, would even accompany him wherever he went and assume a human form to protect him' (491).

'I was taken to the Zoological Garden. I went into samadhi at the sight of the lion, for the carrier of the Mother awakened in my mind the consciousness of the Mother Herself. In that state who could see the other animals? I had to return home after seeing only the lion.'²⁶

'I visited the museum once. I was shown fossils. A whole animal has become stone! Just see what effect has been produced by company! Likewise, by constantly living in the company of a holy man one verily becomes holy' (400-1).

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

'The attitude of looking on woman as mother is very pure. ... Looking on woman as mother is like fasting on the ekadasi day without touching even a drop of water; in this attitude there is not the slightest trace of sensual enjoyment. I worshipped the Shorasi as my mother; I looked on all parts of her body as those of my mother. This attitude of regarding God as Mother is the last word in sadhana' (701).

'You may insult me, but don't hurt her (Sarada Devi) feelings. If He who dwells in this (meaning his own body) hisses, you may somehow get by; but if He who dwells in her hisses, no one—not even Brahma, Vishnu, or Siva—will be able to protect you.'²⁷

'When a Marwari devotee offered me ten thousand rupees, I felt as if someone had taken a saw to my head. I prayed, "Mother, after such a long time You tempt me again?" In order to test her [the Holy Mother's] mind, I called her in and said: "Look, this devotee wants to give me this

money. As I refused to accept it, he wants to give it to you. Why don't you take it?" She immediately replied: "How could this be possible? No, the money shouldn't be accepted. My acceptance would be as good as yours. If I took it, I'd certainly spend it to serve you and buy things you need. You would therefore be the virtual owner of it. People love and respect you for your renunciation. For that reason, this money can by no means be accepted." I heaved a sigh of relief at her words.²⁸

'She (Sarada Devi) is Saraswati. She has assumed a human body to impart wisdom to men; but she has hidden her celestial beauty lest people, by looking at her, should befoul their minds with sinful thoughts.'²⁹

Narendranath

'One day I found that my mind was soaring high in samadhi along a luminous path. It soon transcended the stellar universe and entered the subtle realm of ideas. As it ascended higher and higher, I found the path lined with ideal forms of gods and goddesses on both sides. My mind then reached the outer limits of that region, where a luminous barrier separates the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. My mind crossed that barrier to enter the transcendental realm, where no corporeal being was visible. Even the gods dare not enter that sublime realm and are content to keep their seats far below. But the next moment I saw seven venerable rishis seated there in samadhi. It occurred to me that these rishis must have surpassed not only humans but even the gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. Lost in admiration, I was reflecting on their greatness when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine child. The child came to one of the rishis, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely arms and, addressing him in a sweet

voice, tried to drag his mind down from the state of samadhi. That magic touch roused the rishi from the superconscious state, and he fixed his half-opened eyes upon the wonderful child. His beaming countenance showed that the child was the treasure of his heart. In great joy the divine child spoke to him: "I am going down. You must go with me." The rishi remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent. As he gazed at the child, he again became immersed in samadhi. I was surprised to see a fragment of his body and mind then descending to earth in the form of a bright light. No sooner had I seen Narendra than I recognized him to be that rishi.'³⁰

Divine Moods

'I say to the Divine Mother: "O Mother, I am the machine and Thou art the Operator. I am the house and Thou art the Indweller. I am the chariot and Thou art the Charioteer. I do as Thou makest me do; I speak as Thou makest me speak; I move as Thou makest me move. It is not I! It is not I! It is all Thou! It is all Thou!" Hers is the glory; we are only Her instruments. Once Radha, to prove her chastity, carried on her head a pitcher filled with water. The pitcher had a thousand holes, but not a drop of water spilled. People began to praise her, saying, "Such a chaste woman the world will never see again!" Then Radha said to them: "Why do you praise me? Say 'Glory unto Krishna! Hail Krishna!' I

Plate, made of black stone, used by Sri Ramakrishna



am only His handmaid.”³¹

‘After enjoying divine bliss, one looks on the world as crow-droppings. At the very outset I utterly renounced everything. Not only did I renounce the company of worldly people, but now and then the company of devotees as well. I noticed that the devotees were dropping dead one by one, and that made my heart writhe with pain. But now I keep one or two of them with me’ (753).

‘As watercress and some weeds grow in ponds and small pools where there is no current, so religious cults and narrow-minded sects develop in a religious world where people are satisfied with a partial truth that they think is the whole truth.’³²


‘The other day I went to Calcutta. As I drove along the streets in the carriage, I observed that everyone’s attention was fixed on low things. Everyone was brooding over his stomach and running after nothing but food. Everyone’s mind

was turned to “woman and gold”. I saw only one or two with their attention fixed on higher things, with their minds turned to God.’³³

‘I am in a peculiar state of mind. My mind constantly descends from the Absolute to the Relative, and again ascends from the Relative to the Absolute.

‘The attainment of the Absolute is called the Knowledge of Brahman. But it is extremely difficult to acquire. A man cannot acquire the Knowledge of Brahman unless he completely rids himself of his attachment to the world. ...

‘Again, when God changes the state of my mind, when He brings my mind down to the plane of the Relative, I perceive that it is He who has become all these—the Creator, maya, the living beings, and the universe’ (307).

‘Years ago Vaishnavacharan said to me, “One attains Perfect Knowledge when one sees God in man.” Now I see that it is God alone who is moving about in various forms: as a holy man, as a cheat, as a villain. Therefore I say, “Narayana in the guise of the sadhu, Narayana in the guise of the cheat, Narayana in the guise of the villain, Narayana in the guise of the lecher” (419). 

Pitcher, made of copper, that contained Sri Ramakrishna’s relics



References

19. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 300–1.
20. *Gospel*, 779.
21. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 312.
22. *Gospel*, 832.
23. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 319.
24. *Gospel*, 584.
25. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 614.
26. *Gospel*, 391.
27. Swami Nikhilananda, *Holy Mother* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2008), 56.
28. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 862.
29. *Holy Mother*, 85.
30. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 774.
31. *Gospel*, 891.
32. *Sri Ramakrishna and his Divine Play*, 780.
33. *Gospel*, 281.

Vedanta-sara

Swami Bhaskareswarananda

(Continued from the December 2010 issue)

105. Catur-vidha-śarīrāṇi tu

jarāyujāṇḍaja-svedajodbhijjākhyāni.

The four kinds of gross bodies are those that are born of womb, egg, moisture, and soil.

106. Jarāyujāni jarāyubhyo jātāni

manuṣya-paśvādīni.

Jarāyuja are those born of the womb—humans, beasts, and the like.

107. Aṇḍajāny-aṇḍebhyo jātāni

pakṣi-pannagādīni.

Aṇḍaja are those that come out of eggs—birds, reptiles, and the like.

108. Svedajāni svedebhyo jātāni

yūka-maśakādīni.

Svedaja are those that are born of moisture—lice, mosquitoes, and the like.

109. Udbhijjāni bhūmim-udbhidyā jātāni

latā-vṛkṣādīni.

Udbhijja are those that spring from soil—creepers, trees, and the like.

ALL CREATURES HAVE BEEN DIVIDED into four categories, and there are thousands of varieties in each category. This reminds us that Brahman has infinite manifestations. He alone is sporting through all these manifestations. Possessed of this consciousness, you will develop love for and devotion to God and transcend your individuality—the ‘I’ and the world. This is the real meaning of ‘*tat-tvam-asi*’; you are That. Your reality is not ‘I’ but God.

110. Atrāpi caturvidha-sakala-sthūla-

śarīram-ekāneka-buddhiviśayatayā

vanavaj-jalāśayavad-vā samaṣṭir-

vṛkṣavaj-jalavad-vā vyaṣṭir-api bhavati.

Here also all the gross bodies, in their fourfold variety, may be spoken of collectively or individually according to how they are thought of: as one, like a forest or a lake, or as many, like the trees and the quantities of water.

111. Etat-samaṣṭy-upahitaṁ caitanyaṁ

vaiśvānaro virāḍ-ity-ucyate sarva-

narābhīmānitvād-vividhaṁ

rājamānatvāc-ca.

Consciousness associated with the aggregate of gross bodies is called Vaishvanara and Virat, on account of its identification with all bodies and from its manifestation in diverse ways respectively.

These gross bodies, which have arisen from the combination of subtle elements, have essentially originated from *ākāśa*. That again is produced by the *līlā-śakti* of Brahman. The controller who is controlling you from within is the same being controlling every individual. He is called Vaishvanara and Virat. Virat does not indicate physical vastness. *Viśva*, the Reality controlling your gross body is God; *taijasa*, controlling your subtle body, is God; and *prājña*, controlling your causal body, is also God.

In the context of the gross universe, the subtle universe, and the causal universe, the same God is called Virat or Vaishvanara, Hiranyagarbha,

and Ishvara respectively. You must, therefore, have a universal outlook, universal love, and humility.

112. Asyaiṣā samaṣṭiḥ sthūla-śarīram-annavikāratvād-annamayakośaḥ sthūla-bhogāyatanatvāc-ca sthūla-śarīraṁ jāgrad-iti ca vyapadiśyate.

This aggregate body of his is called the alimentary sheath, annamaya kośa, on account of its being a modification of food, and is said to be in the waking state on account of its being the medium for the enjoyment of gross objects.

113. Etad-vyaṣṭy-upahitaṁ caitanyaṁ viśva-ity-ucyate sūkṣma-śarīrābhimānam-āparityajya sthūla-śarīrādi-praviṣṭatvāt.

Consciousness associated with the individual gross body is designated as viśva, on account of its entering the gross body and related entities without giving up its identification with the subtle body.

114. Asyāpy-eṣā vyaṣṭiḥ sthūla-śarīram-annavikāratvād-eva hetor-annamaya-kośo jāgrad-iti cocyate.

This individual gross body of his (the jiva) is also called the alimentary sheath on account of its being a modification of food, and is said to be in the waking state.

Within your gross body consisting of hands, feet, nose, face, and the like God resides. In your *annamaya kośa*, alimentary sheath, resides God as *viśva*. In the *viññānamaya*, *manomaya*, and *prāṇamaya kośas*, resides God as *taijasa*, while in the *ānandamaya kośa*, the blissful sheath, God resides as *prajāña*.

This gross body has various names: *annamaya kośa*, *sthūla-śarīra*, *jāgrad*, among others. These different terms have been used in the Upanishads to refer to the same gross body. The gross

body is also called *bhogāyatana*, place for gross physical enjoyments. Similarly, through the subtle personality subtle pleasures are enjoyed. Even in the causal body, where there is no 'I and mine', bliss is experienced. Although its nature is different at the three levels and in the three states, enjoyment takes place in all of them, and this will continue as long as Brahman is not realized.

All the three are interrelated. The *sthūla* is the gross form of the *sūkṣma*, subtle, and the comparatively grosser expression of the *kāraṇa*, causal, is the *sūkṣma*. That is why the effect of the subtle will definitely be felt in the gross state too. The word *āparityajya* in the previous shloka indicates 'non-separation'. Generally, people think that they will get peace through gross physical enjoyment. But that does not happen, because the impressions of physical enjoyment get stored in the subtle body. Similarly, if the mind is allowed to cherish desires, then the physical organs will become active to fulfil them. Therefore, transcend both through knowledge.

115. Tadānim-etau viśva-vaiśvānarau dig-vātārka-varuṇāśvibhiḥ kramān-niyantritena śrotrādīndriya-pañcakena kramāc-chabda-sparśa-rūpa-rasa-gandhān-agnīndropendra-yama-prajāpatibhiḥ kramān-niyantritena vāg-ādīndriya-pañcakena kramādvacanādāna-gamana-visargānandānś-candra-caturmukha-śaṅkarācyutaiḥ kramān-niyantritena mano-buddhy-ahaṅkāra-cittākhyenāntarindriya-catuṣkeṇa kramāt-saṅkalpa-niścayāhaṅkārya-caitānś-ca sarvān-etān sthūla-viṣayān-anubhavataḥ 'jāgarita-sthāno bahiḥ-prajāñah' ity-ādi-śruteḥ.

At that time both viśva and Vaishvanara perceive the gross objects—sound, touch,

colour, taste, and smell—through the respective five sense organs, such as the ears, controlled respectively by (the presiding deities, namely) Dik (the quarters), Air, Sun, Varuna, and the two Ashvins. They also perform the functions of speech, grasping, walking, excretion, and enjoyment respectively through the five organs of action, such as the tongue and so on, controlled respectively by Fire, Indra, Vishnu, Yama, and Prajapati. They also experience uncertainty, determination, sense of personality, and remembrance respectively through the inner organs, namely manas, buddhi, ahankāra, and citta, controlled respectively by the Moon, Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. Witness such Shruti passages as ‘whose place is the waking state, who is conscious of the external world’ (Mandukya Upanishad, 3).

Divinization of the whole universe is the main trend of thought in the Upanishads. That is why it is said that the senses, mind, and related organs are being controlled and presided over by the gods, divine powers. That very Brahman that is sporting as your self, with the help of maya, is also sporting as the controlling deities. Thus, fundamentally, all your powers are under the control of the divine will. Know that none of these powers belong to you—whatever play of divine power you find in the mind, intellect, ego, and *citta* is his. Out of ignorance we think they are material powers.

This is also the teaching of the *Cbhandogya Upanishad*, where various techniques of meditation, *upasanas*, are described. Their main objective is to give us the divine outlook. With this, you will be able to transcend ‘I and mine’ and attain Brahman. Although only the gross senses, mind, and the like have been mentioned here, the subtle aspects are implied. The same gods that control the gross powers also control the subtle powers.

(To be continued)

(Continued from page 241)

The purpose of homeostasis was to carry evolution to a higher level. And that was achieved by developing the cerebral system of man. This particular statement of Claude Bernard brings this meaning to us: ‘A fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life.’ What a beautiful understanding. In fact, Grey Walter considers this as a yoga achieved in the body. The body has achieved yoga. He uses the word as a spiritual term. The spirituality of the body you can see there—a stabilized condition. Even though many things are disturbing it, it stabilizes itself. In the early mammals it was not there. There was no temperature control in the early mammals. In later mammals nature achieved this particular thing.

This subject was taken up by Sir Joseph Barcroft of Cambridge University, where Grey Walter was studying. And he explained the meaning of the statement: ‘A fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life.’ He said: ‘How many times I have taken my boat on a lake and enjoyed the beautiful ripples formed by the passage of the boat. Ripples here, ripples there, and they are forming patterns. I enjoyed it. The regularity, the succession; it is a beautiful sight to see.’ And in physical science, wherever there is pattern, it finds significance. Some profound meaning is there. This was a great inspiration for the scientist. Then, he made a remark: ‘Only if the lake is calm ripple systems are formed. You can’t expect ripple systems on the stormy Atlantic.’ Saying this he added: ‘The psyche that is full of choppy waves can’t achieve high intellectual development.’ This is what he said. A certain calmness is necessary in the heart for higher development in the brain.

(To be continued)

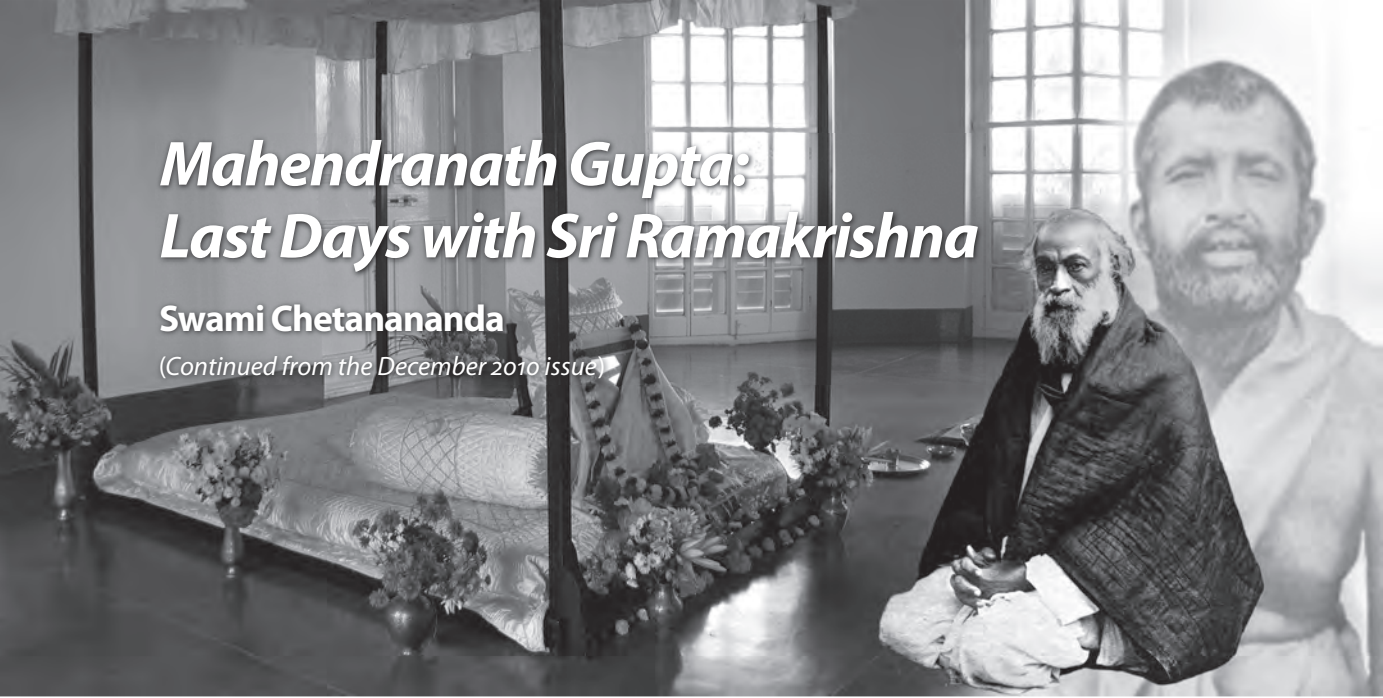
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2. Manusmriti, 4.160.

Mahendranath Gupta: Last Days with Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda

(Continued from the December 2010 issue)



SATURDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 1886 • M visited the Master at 4.00 p.m. The Master talked a little with Hazra and M. He told Hazra that M had brought some of the dust of Kamarpukur. Senior Gopal asked him not to talk anymore. M and Hazra left the room. Sitting at the ghat of the eastern pond, M told Hazra about his visit to Kamarpukur.

Monday, 22 February 1886 • M arrived and found Mahimacharan seated in the Master's room. Previously Mahima did not believe that God could be an avatara, but now he had changed his mind. The Master was pleased to see this change.

Tuesday, 23 February 1886 • M arrived and tried to talk with Narendra, but he was a little indifferent. This coldness may have been due to a misunderstanding that had developed among the householder and monastic disciples about the expenses involved in running the Kashipur household. Ramchandra had asked that the money be spent discreetly and suggested that careful accounts be kept. Narendra resented Ramchandra's suggestions.

Friday, 26 February 1886 • M arrived at Kashipur in the early afternoon after work. The

Master asked M to massage his feet, which made M happy. The Master fell asleep as Shashi and M fanned him. After a while he woke up and the attendant applied ghee to his throat. There were some flowers in a tray nearby. The Master worshipped himself by putting some flowers on his own head. He chewed a piece of myrobalan and gave a chunk to M. The Master arranged a feast for his attendants and asked M to buy some meat. M was delighted to serve them.

Sunday, 28 February 1886 • In the morning M and his younger brother Kishori came to Kashipur. M then left for Dakshineswar, where he prayed to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, what shall I say about your son? You know everything. Mother, I implore you not to give any more suffering to the Master.'

When M returned to Kashipur, the attendants warned him that something bad had happened while he was gone. It had been arranged that Surendra would pay the rent; Balaram would buy the necessities for the Master's diet; and Ramchandra, Girish, Kalipada, M, and other householders would handle any other expenses. While M was at Dakshineswar that day, Ramchandra had proposed cutting the budget.

He suggested that two or three full-time attendants were enough for the Master; the others should return home and visit the Master from time to time. Narendra vehemently opposed this idea and a heated argument ensued. Sri Ramakrishna and the attendant disciples supported Narendra, who wanted to continue the Master's service as usual. Narendra decided not to accept money from the householders any longer; he would beg for funds going from door to door to continue the service of the Master. The attendants decided that they would not allow any householder devotees to visit the Master. Before the situation worsened, the Master reconciled the two groups of disciples. M always supported the young disciples.

Wednesday, 3 March 1886 • When M arrived, he gave four rupees to Latu to buy a pillow and some refreshments, and then gave six rupees to Gopal to settle a debt.

When M went to the Master's room that evening, Shashi was reading to Sri Ramakrishna 'The Banishment of Ramachandra' from the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Surendra arrived and begged forgiveness for the misunderstanding that had happened a few days before. He had not been involved and was upset about the situation. The Master's throat began to bleed, so he indicated that M should take Surendra downstairs and console him. M stayed at Kashipur that night.

Thursday, 4 March 1886 • It was Shivaratri. M went home early in the morning. At 5.30 p.m., after work, he returned to Kashipur. He went directly to the Master's room and sat near him. Niranjana went to Dr Sarkar, who suggested bandaging the Master's throat with marigold leaf, which stops bleeding. The disciples observed Shivaratri the entire night by worshipping and singing songs in praise of Shiva.

That night Narendra experimented with his spiritual power on Kali—later Swami

Abhedananda. Narendra asked Kali to touch his right knee and began to meditate. After a while, Narendra asked Kali about his experience. Kali replied: 'As one feels a shock wave while touching an electric battery, and one's hand trembles, so I felt when touching you.'

Saradananda wrote:

At 4.00 a.m. when the worship of the fourth quarter was over, Swami Ramakrishnananda came to the worship room and told Swamiji [Narendra], 'The Master is calling for you.' Swamiji immediately went to the second floor of the main building, where the Master was staying. Ramakrishnananda also followed him because he was serving the Master.

Seeing Swamiji, the Master said: 'Hello! You are frittering away your power before you have accumulated enough of it. First gather it deep within yourself, and then you will understand where and how you should use it. Mother will let you know. Don't you see what great harm you have done to that boy by infusing your ideas into him? He had been following a specific practice for a long time, and now all is spoilt like a miscarriage in the sixth month of pregnancy. Well, what was supposed to happen has happened. From now on don't do such a thing rashly. The boy is lucky that greater harm did not befall him.'

Swamiji said later: 'I was completely dumbfounded. The Master had come to know whatever we did during worship! What could I do? I remained silent as he scolded me.'¹⁸

M kept watch over the Master throughout the entire night. In the morning he went to the Ganga to bathe and then returned to Sri Ramakrishna to bow down to him. The Master felt as if he were burning, so M fanned him and rubbed oil on his abdomen. Narendra came and informed M that his breakfast was ready.

Friday, 5 March 1886 • M and Narendra were seated on a mat on the lawn. Seeing

Ramchandra entering the garden, M suggested: 'Let us receive him.' But Narendra remained aloof. Since the misunderstanding several days earlier, Ramchandra had not visited the Master. The following incident may have taken place on this day:

Ramchandra Datta wanted to visit the Master, but Niranjana stopped him at the gate. Ram was hurt by this because he was one of the Master's prominent lay devotees. He then said to Latu, 'Please offer these sweets and flowers to the Master and bring a little prasada for me.' Latu was very touched and said to Niranjana, 'Brother, Ram Babu is our very own; why are you putting such restrictions on him?' Still Niranjana was inexorable. Then Latu said rather bluntly, 'At Shyampukur you allowed the actress Binodini to visit the Master and now you are stopping Ram Babu, who is such a great devotee.' This pricked Niranjana's conscience, so he let Ram go to see Ramakrishna. Later when Latu went upstairs, the omniscient Master said to him: 'Look, never see faults in others; rather, see their good qualities.' Latu was embarrassed. He came down and apologized to Niranjana, saying: 'Brother, please don't mind my caustic remark. I am an illiterate person.' This shows how the Master taught his disciples to develop close interpersonal relationships.¹⁹

Sunday, 7 March 1886 • M went to ask Dr Sarkar to visit the Master. They had a long conversation on religion, and then went to Kashipur together in the afternoon. The doctor examined Sri Ramakrishna and announced that the disease was stable. The Master drank some broth made of *masur dal*, pink lentils.

It was Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. M recorded: 'The devotees observed the Master's birthday on a small scale, even though last year it was celebrated lavishly in Dakshineswar. He is not well and the devotees are submerged in grief.'

'The Master's birthday celebration was

very brief,' Latu recalled. 'Brother Naren sang some songs; Surendra Babu brought a beautiful garland and put it around the Master's neck. Balaram Babu and M gave him a cloth and a shirt. Someone else presented the Master with a pair of slippers.'

In the evening there was singing in the ground floor hall. Afterwards Narendra talked about Christ's self-sacrifice for the good of humanity and Buddha's *parinirvana*, passing away. After supper, at 11.00 p.m., M left for home.

Thursday, 11 March 1886 • It was eight o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna was in the big hall on the second floor. Narendra, Shashi, M, Sharat, and Senior Gopal were in the room. Sri Ramakrishna was lying down. Sharat stood by his bed and fanned him. The Master was speaking about his illness.

Master: 'If some of you go to Dakshineswar and see Bholanath, he will give you a medicinal oil and also tell you how to apply it.' After a while Sharat set out for Dakshineswar to get the oil from Bholanath.²⁰

Sunday, 14 March 1886 • M stayed at home during the day and read the *Life of Jesus* by Renan. He visited Kashipur that evening.

Sri Ramakrishna sat facing the north in the large room upstairs. It was evening. He was very ill. Narendra and Rakhal were gently massaging his feet. M sat nearby. The Master, by a sign, asked him too to stroke his feet. M obeyed.

At midnight M was seated by his side. Sri Ramakrishna asked him by a sign to come nearer. The sight of his suffering was unbearable. In a very soft voice and with great difficulty he said to M:

I have gone on suffering so much for fear of making you all weep. But if you all say: 'Oh, there is so much suffering! Let the body die,' then I may give up the body.

These words pierced the devotees' hearts. ... Some thought, 'Is this another crucifixion—

the sacrifice of the body for the sake of the devotees?’ ...

The devotees wondered what was to be done. One of them left for Calcutta. That very night Girish came to the garden-house with two physicians, Upendra and Navagopal. ...

He [the Master] felt a little better and said to them: ‘The illness is of the body. That is as it should be; I see that the body is made of the five elements.’

Turning to Girish, he said: ‘I am seeing many forms of God. Among them I find this one also [meaning his own form]’ (941).

Monday, 15 March 1886 • In the morning the Master felt somewhat better. He said to the devotees:

‘Do you know what I see right now? I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. ... Now I have no pain at all. I am my old self again. ... If the body were to be preserved a few days more, many people would have their spirituality awakened. ... Such is not the will of God. ...

‘God becomes man, an Avatar, and comes to earth with His devotees. And the devotees leave the world with Him.’

Rakhal: ‘Therefore we pray that you may not go away and leave us behind.’

Sri Ramakrishna smiles and says: ‘A band of minstrels suddenly appears, dances, and sings, and it departs in the same sudden manner. They come and they return, but none recognizes them’ (941–3).

In the afternoon Ramchandra brought Dr J M Coates, the head of Calcutta Medical College. He went inside the Master’s room but kept his shoes on. He sat on

the mat and reclined on a bolster. Before Dr Coates started to examine his throat, the Master asked him to wait for a minute and then went into samadhi. After the examination Dr Coates said that the Master was suffering from cancer and his condition was incurable. Nonetheless, he suggested that the current treatment be continued. A devotee paid the doctor’s thirty-two-rupee fee. M stayed in the Master’s room that night.

Tuesday, 16 March 1886 • Early in the morning the Master began struggling for breath, so Dr Trailokya was brought from Baranagore. M went to bathe in the Ganges. Upon his return, his cousin reported that his wife’s mental condition had become worse. When the Master felt a little better that afternoon, M left for home with Girish and Devendra.

Thursday, 18 March 1886 • M went to Kashipur after work. When he arrived, Girish’s brother Atul Ghosh told him that Girish was drunk and praying, ‘The Master must get well.’

*Group picture taken at Baranagore Math on 30 January 1887
(in the circle Mahendranath Gupta)*



The Master heard about Girish's prayer. Somehow the Master felt better that day.

Friday, 19 March 1886 • It was the day before Dol Yatra, Holi, an auspicious day commemorating Krishna's playing with the gopis with coloured powder. That evening Girish, Devendra, M, and the attendants assembled in the Master's room. They all touched the Master's feet with *abir*, red powder, and the Master sprinkled the powder on their chests and heads. They were happy seeing the Master's joyful face. They then began kirtan and danced by the side of the pond.

Saturday, 20 March 1886 • It was Dol Yatra, the festival of colours and also Sri Chaitanya's birthday. Girish, M, Narendra, and others assembled in the hall downstairs. Narendra began to sing a song about Sri Chaitanya, which overwhelmed M. The devotees went to Sri Ramakrishna's room and offered *abir* at his feet, and he blessed them. Some women and also some Marwaris came to pay their homage to the Master. After a while the Marwari devotees left, saying: 'Victory to Satchidananda, Victory to Satchidananda!' Girish and others covered M's head with coloured powder.

In the evening the Master said to M: 'I have no desire to keep this body. I can't eat.' M consoled him, saying: 'We wish you weren't in pain.'

Master (*to M*): 'If I wish, I could withdraw my mind from this pain, but I have no desire to keep this body anymore. Nevertheless, I get joy when I see you all. That is the reason I endure this suffering.'

Then M had a long conversation with the Master about his divinity.

Sri Ramakrishna said about his intimate devotees: 'All of you are part of this place [meaning himself].'

M: 'That I have understood. But I am not fully satisfied.'

Master: 'You will never be fully satisfied.'

M: 'Sir, the amount of longing I had at the beginning still remains. I am not fully content.'

Master: 'None can have full contentment in God [because He is infinite]. I am telling you this secret. Please don't divulge it to others.'

Meanwhile the Master was served farina pudding for supper. When he saw it, he remarked: 'What is the use of eating anymore? I can't digest it.'

Seeing M depressed, the Master said: 'Don't worry so much. Make your mind strong.'

Sunday, 21 March 1886 • Dr Sarkar arrived at 4.00 p.m. M and Narendra were in the Master's room. The doctor examined Sri Ramakrishna and advised M to give him six drops of tulsi juice. Someone asked if the Master could have a boat trip on the Ganga for fresh air, but the doctor didn't approve. He jokingly said: 'Jesus Christ would walk on the water.'

Seeing the Master smiling, Rakhal remarked: 'Despite all this pain, the Master has not lost his smile.'

Master: 'The Mother is teaching all [through me] that this body is transient and so many things are going on; still that pure I-consciousness is unaffected.'

Amritalal: 'Sir, your suffering is also a lesson for others.'

Master: 'Is there anything in the scriptures about one person suffering from pain for others?'

M mentioned that it is recorded in the Christian scriptures, and Sharat corroborated it, saying: 'Lord Jesus was crucified in order to expiate the sins of sinners.'

(*To be continued*)

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18. *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*, 149.
19. *God Lived with Them*, 252.
20. *Gospel*, 939.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



***Bhartrihari: Language,
Thought and Reality***
Ed. Mithilesh Chaturvedi

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. Website: www.mlbd.com. 2009. xxxii + 615 pp. ₹ 1,595.

This volume comprises of twenty-seven essays with international authorship and is the outcome of an international seminar marking the publisher's (MLBD) first centenary of publishing books on Indology—books conceived, sponsored, and finally published by MLBD. It heralds a new trend to celebrate the depths and expanse of ancient Indian scholarship and perhaps to gauge the reach of ancient Indian ideas. MLBD has been successful in bringing together luminaries such as V N Jha, G C Pande, K D Tripathi, Aklujkar, Bronkhorst, Cardona, Deshpande, and other stalwarts from across the globe. The title of the book is reminiscent of a similar title by B Lee Whorf, whose work made some impact upon the Western linguistic thought for a very brief period during the mid-twentieth century. Jha's keynote address is quite elaborate and rich, highlighting Bhartrihari's theory and ideas whose relevance in the present era has become more important.

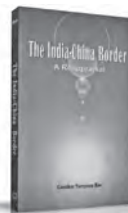
Bhartrihari (5th cent. CE), philosopher and an ardent follower of the Vedic Agama tradition, is not only a philosopher of language but a cognitivist, grammarian, and semanticist as well. It is not only speech but the human ability to comprehend that Bhartrihari enquires with profundity, tracing its origins to the Rig Veda. The Indian tradition has been holistic and in it moksha, liberation, is considered the ultimate purpose of life. Bhartrihari believes that 'doing good grammar is an act that leads to *mokṣa*'.

The essays in the volume are neatly arranged, beginning with those that focus on Bhartrihari's texts;

the terms employed by him; his reliance on tradition; his innovative usages; and his philosophical statements on language, reality, thought, temporality, universalism, Indian schools of philosophy and religion, syntax, semantics, and language cognition. Finally, there are essays comparing Bhartrihari with Western philosophers like Humboldt and other modern language philosophers.

The volume is a rich addition to our understanding of Bhartrihari. The international authorship reveals that Bhartrihari's contribution to knowledge is being registered and respected across the globe. MLBD deserves to be congratulated for making such unprecedented move, whose result has been overwhelmingly refreshing and satisfying.

Prof. Rajnath Bhat
Department of Linguistics
Banaras Hindu University



***The India-China Border:
A Reappraisal***
Gondker Narayana Rao

Motilal Banarsidass. 2009. xvi + 106 pp. ₹ 750.

India and China, the two nation-states of resurgent Asia, are inheritors of age old rich civilizations. The two Asian neighbours are giants in terms of territory, natural resources, industrialization, and military power. Together they account for nearly forty percent of the world's population. In the post-colonial period, particularly since late fifties, the dispute over some 4,000 km of borders became a thorny issue in the India-China bilateral relations, and till today both nations continue to grapple with the intractable dispute. Given the salience of this issue it is indeed a positive step that the publishers of the original print have come out with this revised edition.

Several works in India, China, and Britain have attempted to access this matter. Rao's book

discusses the original material available in the form of maps, documents, treaties, official correspondence, and detailed reports prepared by the foreign ministries of China and India. The defining features of the work is a systematic analysis of the nature of the evidence involved, the fundamental geographical factors, and the major historical events that shaped the evolution of the border relation between the two nations. It is foreworded by the eminent historian S Gopal, who headed the Historical Division of the Foreign Ministry, Government of India. There are detailed chapters on topics ranging from 'Nature of the Dispute' and 'Nature of Evidence' to the historical backdrop of 'Tibet and Sinkiang in British and Chinese Policies', which constitutes introductory sections of the book.

The India-China border dispute involves three sectors. The western sector consists of the Ladakh region of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir; the middle sector comprises the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh; and the eastern sector consists of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The author shows how the British were obsessed with Russia, which led them to be predisposed in China's favour and encouraged Chinese occupation of certain areas. Thus, the role of Britishers has to be understood in its correct historical background. The middle section of the book shows the evolution of India-China borders in modern colonial era. Three chapters are detailed studies of the 1864 Ladakh Eastern Boundary, the 1875 Aksai Chin Boundary, and the Kashmir-Sinkiang Boundary before 1947. The next two chapters provide extensive useful information on the eastern sector, the north-east frontier of India before 1914, and the administration of the north-east frontier from 1914 to 1947. It shows how the Chinese had revived their interest in the strategic area of Tibet since the late thirties. The last chapter concludes the discussions on the three sectors mentioned above.

The author asserts that the claims advanced by China in the western sector had no historical basis. As regards the middle sector, there had been no boundary dispute between India and Tibet in the past. In the eastern sector it is recognized that the Chinese claims to the vast areas are without basis. The author further asserts that the objections of

the Chinese to the agreement of 1914 have no validity. The final observation of the author is significant: 'The inevitable conclusion one reaches is that if the India-China border problem is still unresolved it is not because of any lack on the Indian side to settle it on a reasonable basis, but because of deeper and more complex factors underlying Chinese international policies' (103-4). In short, the book gives a good understanding of the evolution of India-China borders in a historical perspective from the beginning of the modern period. As the author was advisor to the Indian delegation that discussed the border issue with Chinese officials in the sixties, he has extensively used all the original sources. It is indeed a commendable research work undertaken by an expert back in the sixties and now republished at a time when the vexed issue is being discussed in the new mechanism of the Joint Working Group and Expert Group. The book should be of invaluable help to all those who are interested in India-China relations in particular and international relations in general.

Keshav Mishra

Reader, Dept of History FSS,
Banaras Hindu University



**Encyclopedia of Kashmiri
Pandit Culture and Heritage**
C L Kaul

Ansh Publications and Distributors,
1253, Sector D, Pocket I, Vasant Kunj,
New Delhi 110 070. Website: www.anshpublications.com. 2009. xx + 801 pp.
₹ 2,100.

'Agar Firdaus bar ru-e-zamin ast, hami ast o' hami ast o' hami ast; if there is heaven on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.' These immortal words of the Persian poet Firdaus give us some idea about the legendary beauty of Kashmir. The poet was so enthralled by the heavenly ambience of the valley that these words spontaneously issued from his lips. This beautiful environment and its equally hoary tradition have been enriched and safeguarded by the various local sects, of whom the Kashmiri pandits are predominant. This book brings out details of the history and traditions of Kashmiri pandits.

Meticulously arranged into various categories, this encyclopaedia provides a glimpse of the history of Kashmiri pandits, the land and the landscape, the characteristics of the community, their traditions, temples, festivals, and rituals. It also enumerates contributions by prominent people of this community to Kashmir in varied fields like arts, education, law, literature, science, spirituality, and politics. Presenting a brief sketch of his life, the author tells us about the inspiration behind his work.

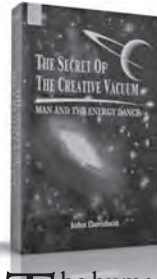
Kashmiri phrases have been given with their meaning at the appropriate places. This enables the reader to get acquainted with popular sayings and words of the language. The author displays a candid style when he dissects the psyche of the Kashmiri pandits and unhesitatingly brings out the follies of their character.

Unlike many similar works, this volume does not stop at a historical description but mentions current persons and places with intricate details. The exhaustive nature of this book is revealed by the section on the identity of the community, where the author thoroughly discusses castes, names, occupations, pastimes, proverbs, folklore, wit and humour, dress, ornaments, cuisine, and more. We are also supplied with a number of recipes to try for ourselves!

Throughout the text adequate references to sourcebooks are given. More than three hundred photographs and illustrations enhance the value of the text matter. Each chapter ends with a quote in Kashmiri and its translation. A key helps us in pronouncing the Kashmiri words. A detailed glossary elucidates vernacular terms. There are separate indexes for different topics. A list of materials required for performing various rituals, a list of selected references, and a key for abbreviations are also provided.

Coming from the pen of an engineer, this work displays exquisite craftsmanship. Printed on excellent paper, it would be a good reference for Kashmiri pandits residing outside the valley for many generations. It could also be of good use to students of Kashmir or anyone interested in knowing about this 'heaven on earth'.

Swami Narasimhananda
Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata



The Secret of the Creative Vacuum

John Davidson

New Age Books, A-44 Naraina Phase-I, New Delhi 110 028. Website: www.newagebooksindia.com. 2009. 426 pp. ₹ 425.

The human quest since the dawn of civilization has been for reality. This quest in the external world became science, in the internal world metaphysics, philosophy, and meditation. These two parallel paths have disregarded each other for long, but the situation changed in the beginning of the last century with two new scientific theories: the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. The latter especially has shaken scientists with its subatomic wave-particle duality, the uncertainty principle, and the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox. The whole scientific conception of reality is now being questioned. Some scientists even started invoking consciousness to explain theories and thus try to bridge the gap between science and spirituality.

John Davidson proposes another possible linking: the vacuum state. It has been known for some time, due to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, that the vacuum state is not static, passive, and inert. It is a state of intense activity with energy and mass transfers constantly occurring. The author raises the question: could the vacuum state be the missing factor that explains the apparent dichotomies in Nature? Is it by ignoring it that physicists find themselves in knots? The author strongly believes it so and has tried to justify his belief through logical and cogent arguments.

The book has two parts: the first shorter one is 'Magician's Dance', which contains five chapters, the second longer part is 'Unveiling of the Dance' and has ten chapters. The first is an introduction to the principles of the vacuum state and its relation to the human system. The author describes how human psychology can be better understood with the help of the vacuum state. It also introduces the concept of the subtle body. Several related topics like environmental pollution, akashic records, and homeopathy are covered. The author's

attempt to relate all these concepts to the vacuum state is admirable. Whether he is successful, and if so how far, is a matter of individual opinion. The second part discusses the place of the vacuum state in modern science. There is a critical analysis of the fundamental principles of science. The author asks: how fundamental are these scientific fundamentals? Some of these questions have been bothering modern scientific philosophers. The author is just reiterating them in a comprehensive manner.

The most important point is about certain strange phenomena, noticed during scientific experiments, that cannot be explained by conventional laws. Not that scientists are unaware of these phenomena, but the author's contention is that they have been brushed under the carpet and ignored completely. Science, however, has to face them some day or the other. Can the vacuum state provide an answer? The author feels confident that it can.

The mystery of the universe is the existence of dark matter and dark energy, without which the universe becomes highly unstable. Astrophysicists are slowly veering to the position that the vacuum state can account for this missing matter and energy.

The author has tried to establish a link between mysticism and science, but the arguments appear to be rather far-fetched. They are still in the preliminary stages and may need further investigation. The attempt is truly good, especially if it can explain so many mysteries of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

One gets the feeling that the author is doing loud thinking and provoking the reader to react! There is a plethora of ideas here and every possibility that the reader may lose track of the thrust of the book. Nevertheless, the book poses a challenge to the readers. Hopefully, these ideas will not be brushed aside by the scientific establishment. The book provides an alternate way of looking at scientific facts, and for this reason the author needs to be profusely thanked.

Dr N V C Swamy

Dean of Academic Programmes,
Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana,
Bengaluru



Unfolding The Mindfield: Experiences of a Spiritual Entrepreneur

Madhav Kamat

Indialog Publications, O-22 Lajpat
Nagar II, New Delhi 110 024. Website:
www.indialog.co.in. 2010. xvi + 229 pp.
₹ 195.

The author describes episodes, anecdotes, spiritual journeys, important personalities, places, and experiences that have helped enlarge his consciousness during the last fifty years. The moral and ethical directions from his father and others has enabled him to live an intense and productive life as a professional entrepreneur.

The author is a representative of a subset of competent globalized middle class Indian professionals, who are multilingual and comfortable in multicultural settings, in a team, or in a community. They are beneficiaries of India's investment in higher education.

The book is divided into fifty-three well-written and easy to read essays. Each essay has either a human or a moral angle.

Madhav Kamat quotes his father's advice, 'You have mastered the engineering subjects in college. You also have received administrative skills while working with the ITC group. However, you need to have a third harmonising factor, spiritual perception. It is this third dimension together with the other two capabilities that will give you the right insight into starting and developing a new venture.' The advice seems to have been used well.

Essays on mystical experiences and the personalities that enriched his life are interesting and candid. Appendix 1 provides some techniques for stress management and relaxation. Appendix 2 provides biographies of scientists and the mystics who became his exemplars. The book is amiable and has a positive message based on dharma in worldly or spiritual pursuits.

Prof D P Chaudhri

Visiting Honorary Senior Fellow
Dept of Management, Faculty of Business,
Monash University, Australia

REPORTS

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Math, Madurai, organized an all-Tamil Nadu devotees' conference from 3 to 5 December 2010 in which about 9,000 delegates participated. Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the conference.

Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar, organized an all-Tripura devotees' conference at the ashrama on 5 December, which was attended by 645 devotees.

On 15 December Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a coaching centre building and laid the foundation stone for the proposed ITI administrative and hostel buildings at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur**, on the occasion of its silver jubilee and in the presence of Dr Raman Singh, chief minister of Chhattisgarh, and several other dignitaries.

Srimat Swami Gitanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the renovated Sarada Devi Sabhangan—multipurpose hall—at **Ramakrishna Math, Kankurgachhi**, on 27 December, Holy Mother's birthday.

The newly built Sarada Bhavan—office-cum-bookstall building—at **Ramakrishna Math, Coimbatore**, was inaugurated on 30 December.



From August to December **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chapra**, conducted a child eye-care programme in which 1,566 school children of Chapra town and 11 nearby villages underwent eye check-ups. 64 of these children having refractory errors were given free glasses.

Relief

Flood Relief • Devastating floods in some districts of Tamil Nadu during the month of December 2010 left several deaths and hundreds homeless. In consequence, **Chennai Math** served 64,400 plates of cooked food to 9,550 flood victims in 30 villages of Thiruvavur and Nagapattinam districts.

Winter Relief • 6,306 blankets were distributed to the needy through the following centres: **Agartala**: 285; **Baghbazar**: 1,053; **Belgharia**: 1,118; **Chandigarh**: 250; **Chapra**: 2,500; **Coimbatore Mission**: 300; **Karimganj**: 500; **Manasadwip**: 200; **Shyamla Tal**: 100. **Shyamla Tal** centre also distributed 300 jackets to local people.

Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items to needy people: **Belgharia**: 2,037 saris, 1,942 dhotis, 203 lungis, 1,860 shirts, 1,860 pants, 3,389 children's garments, and 807 mosquito nets; **Chapra**: clothes to 1,000 children; **Porbandar**: 2,817 kg rice, 1,555 kg dal, 550 l oil, 550 chaddars, and 576 packets of biscuits.

Synopsis of the Ramakrishna Mission Governing Body's Report for 2009-10

The 101st Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, the 19 December 2010 at 3.30 p.m. The Mission

released a commemorative volume on the Ramakrishna Mission and a booklet on its relief services on the completion of 100 years of registration of

the Mission with the Registrar of Societies. The 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna will be celebrated in March 2011.

The 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda will be observed between January 2013 and January 2014. The National Committee set up under the chairmanship of the prime minister of India approved our scheme of Rs 100 crore for various service-oriented programmes all over India for four years, from 2010 to 2014. The major programmes are: children's health improvement and all-round development in 150 villages, educational development and self-empowerment of rural women in 10 villages, alleviation of severe poverty from 10 selected pockets, value education for the youth, publication of books on Swamiji in different languages, and production of films on Swamiji.

In the educational field the following new projects deserve special mention: starting of a two-year MSc course in agricultural bio-technology and a PhD programme in environment and disaster management by Narendrapur faculty centre of Vivekananda University; three-year bachelor courses in critical care technology and operation theatre technology under West Bengal University of Health Sciences by the Seva Pratishthan hospital centre (Kolkata); a one-year course in ancient Greek and a six-month communicative course each in French and Spanish by the Institute of Culture (Kolkata).

In the medical field the following new projects deserve special mention: starting of an OPD block, an MRI unit and a two-bed haemo-dialysis unit by Itangar centre; a twenty-bed primary health care unit and an orthopaedic clinic for outpatients by Ranchi (Sanatorium) centre; a charitable dispensary by Srinagar centre; a mobile medical unit each by Muzaffarpur and Bankura centres.

In the rural development field the following new projects deserve special mention: construction of a mist chamber by Ranchi (Morabadi) centre for hardening the saplings produced from the tissue culture laboratory; a number of free training programmes on lac cultivation, leaf moulding, motor driving, conducted by Ranchi (Sanatorium) centre for poor and tribal people; a post-Aila social rehabilitation project conducted by Lokashiksha

Parishad of Narendrapur centre (Kolkata) for trauma-affected women and children in 63 villages of Gosaba Island through counselling and supply of hygiene kits and sanitary materials to 321 anganwadi centres, 160 primary schools, 40 high schools and 40 ssks (Shishu Shikhan Kendras).

During the year under review the Ramakrishna Math started a new sub-centre at Gourhati in West Bengal. Under the Math the following new developments deserve special mention: starting of a laboratory block, an OPD counter, a physiotherapy unit and a laparoscopy department by Thiruvananthapuram centre and a homeopathic system implemented through Prevention of Deformity Camps in association with the Society for Welfare of the Handicapped Persons, Durgapur, West Bengal, to heal ulcers and to help the leprosy-affected persons regain lost sensation by Chennai Math centre.

Outside India, Chittagong Mission centre started a new sub-centre at Fateyabad. Sylhet centre and Fateyabad sub-centre in Bangladesh started computer training courses.

During the year the Math and Mission undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation programmes in several parts of the country involving an expenditure of ₹ 6.71 crore, benefiting 11.18 lakh people belonging to 2.86 lakh families in 1,134 villages.

Welfare work was done by way of providing scholarships to poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick, and destitute people; the expenditure incurred was ₹ 7.21 crore.

Medical service was rendered to more than 80.73 lakh people through 15 hospitals, 130 dispensaries, and 59 mobile medical units; the expenditure incurred was ₹ 88.37 crore.

Nearly 3.85 lakh students were studying in our educational institutions from kindergarten to university level. A sum of ₹ 171.46 crore was spent on educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of ₹ 27.92 crore. We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our members and friends for their kind co-operation and help.

Swami Prabhananda
General Secretary

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission



JUST RELEASED

VOLUME IV
of
Sri Sri Ramakrishna
Kathamrita

in English

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M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta), a son of the Lord and disciple, elaborated his diaries in five parts of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' in Bengali that were first published by Kathamrita Bhawan, Calcutta in the years 1902, 1905, 1908, 1910 and 1932 respectively. This series is a verbatim translation in Hindi of the same.

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All enquiries and payments should be made to:



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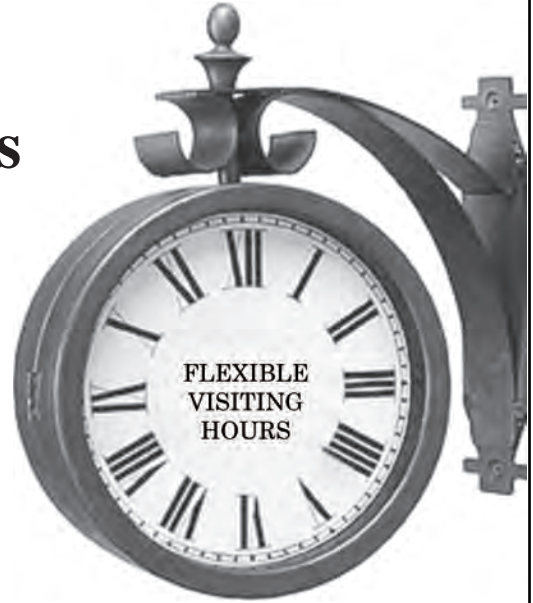
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COME! NURTURE THESE FLOWERS!

The Ashrama has been running a free hostel for underprivileged and orphaned children from classes V to X since 1936. There is an urgent need for repair and renovation of existing buildings and for creating a corpus fund for maintaining the hostel of 100 children, providing them with food, accommodation, and study materials free of cost.

We appeal to the generous public and well-wishers to donate liberally for *Hostel Renovation Fund*. An Endowment of ₹ 1 lakh and above may be created in memory of the loved ones. Donations towards the Endowment/Corpus Fund are exempt from 100% Income Tax under 35AC. Donations towards other activities of the Ashrama—daily worship, charitable dispensaries, celebrations, and maintenance are exempt from I.T. under 80G.

Cheques/Bank Drafts/M.O. may be drawn in favour of 'Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady' and sent to the below address. Donors from overseas can send their contributions in foreign currency online to our Account No 338602010005806 while Indian donors can send their donations to the Account No 338602010009164 at Union Bank of India, Kalady (IFSC Code: UBIN0533866).



Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama

(Hqs. Ramakrishna Math & Mission, Belur Math)

PO Kalady, Ernakulam-683574 • Ph:0484-2461071; 09447051231 • Email: srkaadv@dataone.in

Swami Amaleshananda
Adhyaksha

BUILD A TEMPLE OF HEALTH



Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur runs the oldest eye hospital in North Bihar. Besides having a well-equipped Eye Operation Theatre and a thirty-bed Eye Ward it has Allopathy, Homeopathy, Dental, X-ray and Pathology departments where poor and needy patients get treatment almost free of cost. The present building was made of mud and bricks in the year 1946 and is now in a dilapidated condition. Hence, keeping in view the urgency of having a new building for the hospital we have taken up a three years project of charitable and hundred-bed Eye, ENT, Dental Hospital cum Diagnostic Centre with provision of paramedical training institute at our Ashrama premises. The estimated cost of the first phase of the project (2010-11) is about ₹ 3.50 crore.

Construction Cost of Hospital Building (12000 sq ft)	₹ 1.7 crore
Purchase of Medical Equipment	₹ 50 lakh
One year maintenance cost and free services to patients	₹ 30 lakh
Permanent Endowment Fund	₹ 1 crore

We earnestly request our devotees, well wishers, and admirers to contribute to the noble cause of serving God in poor and downtrodden. Contributions can be made by Cheque/Draft in favour of '*Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur*'. All contributions made to our Ashrama are exempt from Income Tax under section 80 G of Income tax Act, 1961.

Swami Bhavatmananda
Secretary



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA

Swami Vivekananda Path, P O Bela, Dist. Muzaffarpur, Bihar 843 116

Email: rkm.muzaffarpur@gmail.com Ph.: 0621-2272127, 2272963



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA (CHARITABLE HOSPITAL)

(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission, PO Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, West Bengal)

Swami Vivekananda Marg, Vrindaban, Dist. Mathura, Uttar Pradesh 281121 • Ph: 0565-2442310

Fax: 0565-2443310 • Website: www.rkmsvrind.org • Email: rkmsvrnd@gmail.com / info@rkmsvrind.org

CARING FOR PILGRIMS

Started in 1907, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, runs a 165 bed charitable hospital, providing free medical services to the poor and the needy of this place of pilgrimage for the past 103 years. The total number of patients treated during the year 2009-10 was 3,33,996. We also run a Rural Mobile Medical Service, a School of Nursing, Non-formal education centres, widow & TB welfare programs, and Dairy along with various other charitable activities.

We are happy to announce that now donations to *Infrastructure Development and Corpus Fund* of the Sevashrama are eligible for 100% exemption from Income tax under section 35 AC of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Special Project Details

Estimated Cost (₹ in crore)

Infrastructure Development (including medical equipment and other facilities)	24.15
Corpus Fund (for maintenance of the hospital and free distribution of medicines)	10.00
Grand Total	34.15

Cheques/Drafts may please be drawn in favour of *Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban* and sent to the above address. You may also deposit your donation into our account with AXIS Bank having number 9100 1001 8246 169 and inform us by post, email, or phone. Please quote your Permanent Account Number (PAN) while sending donations for specified projects.

Apart from the above, you can donate for the Hospital, School of Nursing, Kala Babu Kunj, and other Welfare programs run by the Sevashrama. All other donations to Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, are exempt from Income tax under section 80G of Income tax act, 1961.

Swami Suprakashananda
Secretary





APPEAL FOR RESTORATION

Ramakrishna Kutir at Almora, Uttarakhand, was founded at the behest of Swami Vivekananda by Srimat Swamis Turiyanandaji Maharaj and Shivanandaji Maharaj, celebrated monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Unprecedented rains and cloud burst in September 2010 at Almora have caused tremendous landslide, gorges, cracks and land-sinking in the Ashrama. The changed land contour has damaged the temple and other buildings. Engineers have suggested abandoning an old building and rebuilding another inhabitable one.

This Ashrama is mainly a retreat centre where monks, devotees, and admirers of Sri Ramakrishna come, live in a spiritual atmosphere, and get peace of mind. This spirituality is still alive and vibrant. The effect of Swami Turiyanandaji's intense austerities here will remain for eternity. Apart from the continuous welfare activities for the poor people of the hill regions and needy students, this Ashrama conducted relief work by distributing 5000 woollen blankets to the victims of the said calamity and devastation in Almora district.

We appeal to you to extend your helping hands to save the Ashrama. The restoration of land should be completed before the rainy season of 2011, and then the repair of the damaged buildings will have to be started. For this restoration project we need more than ₹ 2 crore.

Cheque/Draft may please be drawn in favour of '*Ramakrishna Kutir, Almora*' and sent to: Ramakrishna Kutir, Bright End Corner, Almora, Uttarakhand 263 601. The name of the donors of ₹ 2 lakh and above will be displayed in a prominent place if they wish so. All donations are exempt from Income tax under section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Swami Somadevananda
Adhyaksha



RAMAKRISHNA KUTIR

(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Math, PO Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, West Bengal)

Bright End Corner, Almora, Uttarakhand — 263 601

Ph: 05962-254417 • Email: rkutir@gmail.com / rkutir@yahoo.in